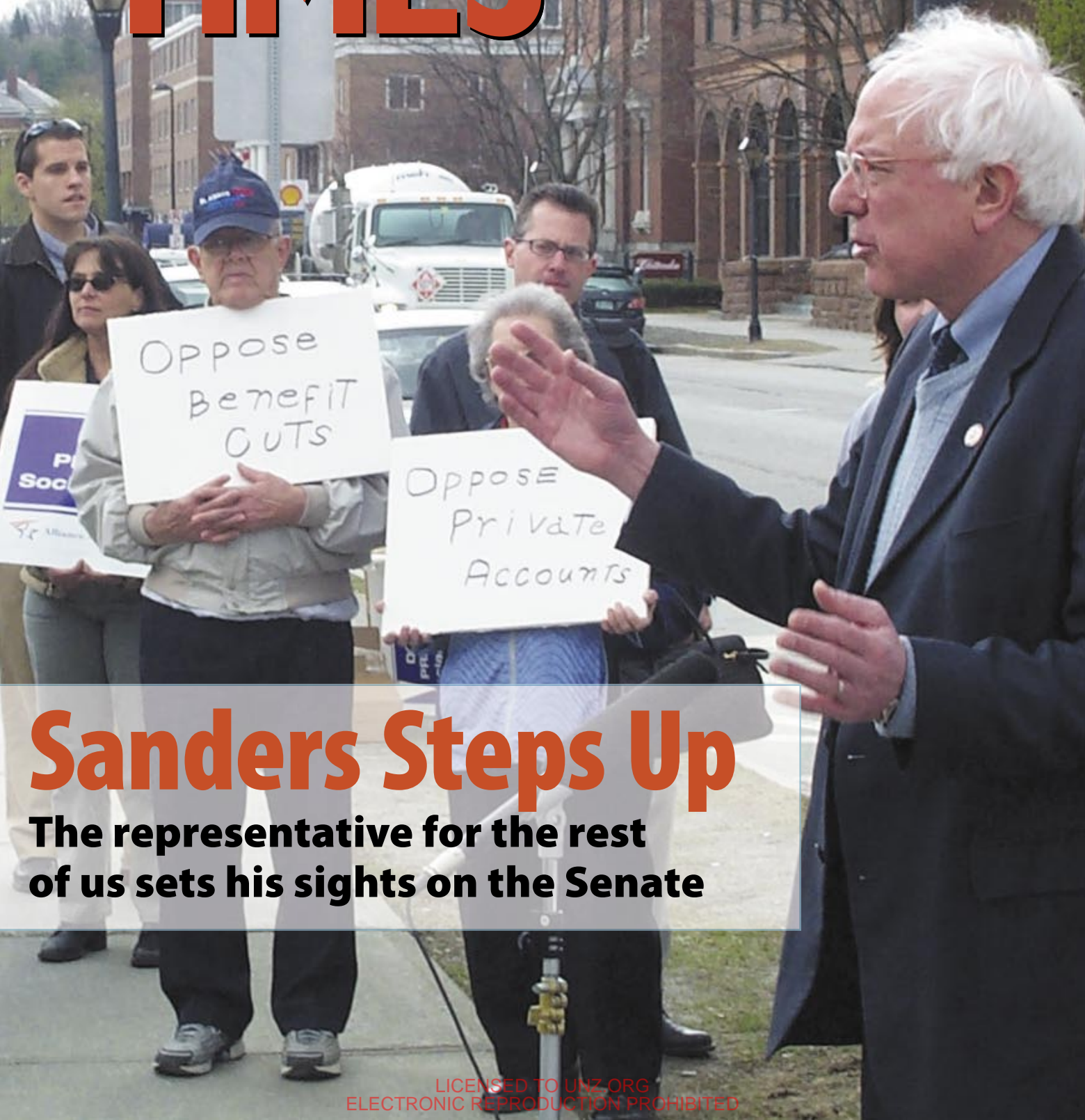


JUNE 20, 2005

IN THESE TIMES



Sanders Steps Up

The representative for the rest of us sets his sights on the Senate



Contents

Volume 29 - Numbers 14-15

Sanders Steps Up By Joel Bleifuss

16 The representative for the rest of us eyes a run at the Senate.

George in Georgia By Frida Berrigan

20 Bush's short, happy visit to the former Soviet country masked the failures of the war on terror.

Injuries to All By Jamie Daniel

22 A human right's report details the gruesome cost of the Bush administration's hostility to workplace safety.

Three-Dimensional Economics By David Moberg

24 CAFTA won't help U.S. workers and blocking it may help the rest of the world.

Crash Landing By Jack Rasmus

26 United Airlines' bailout may be just the beginning of a massive pensions crisis.

Tainted to the Core By Jennifer Washburn

28 How conflicts of interest are hazardous to your health.

13 **The Third Coast** By Salim Muwakkil
Millions more plan to march on D.C.

14 **Viewpoint** By Jerry Starr
A coup from within.

15 **Back Talk** By Susan J. Douglas
Jesus, is *this* the news?

6 The Children's Crusade

By Jennifer Wedekind

Military programs move into middle schools to fish for future soldiers.

8 Before Sunset By Dave Lindorff

A broad coalition urges Congress to rein in the Patriot Act.

10 Free Speech in Action By Jessica Clark

The media reform conference offered differences of opinion, but singular resolve.

11 The Real Memogate By Solomon Hughes

By 2002, the fix was in on U.S.-U.K. plans for war.

12 In Person By Emily Udell

Marjane Satrapi loves the gossip.

32 • Revenge of the Global Finance

By Slavoj Žižek

MOVIES *Star Wars III* and the Taoist ethic of global capitalism.

34 • Look Out, It's Real! By Michael Atkinson

MOVIES Haskell Wexler tells us who he is.

40 • The Battle for PBS By Bill Moyers

BACKPAGE What could move a man from the rocking chair back to the anchor chair?

Cover Photo: Office of Bernie Sanders

“Our greatest danger is not from invasion by foreign enemies. Our dangers are that we may commit suicide from within by complaisance with evil, or by public tolerance of scandalous behavior.”

PRESIDENT HERBERT HOOVER

AS QUOTED AT PRESIDENT BUSH'S
PRESIDENTIALPRAYERTeam.ORG ON MAY 19



Editorial

Lose the Faith By Brian Cook

Christianity has been much on the minds of American politicians. Since the November “moral values” massacre, both parties have frantically

positioned themselves to siphon off portions of the (perceived) all-important Christian vote.

On the Republican side, it's easy to see who's behind their threats to employ the so-called “nuclear option,” and end the Democrats' filibuster of seven right-wing judicial nominees. In the May 11 *Boston Globe*, Dr. James Dobson—founder of the evangelical group Focus on the Family—penned a scathing editorial that demanded an “up-or-down” vote on the nominees and castigated the Democrats for having “confused the electorate with an array of smoke and mirrors.”

Dobson prefers his electorate nauseated by the noxious fumes of the windbag. He's opined that homosexuality results from a weak father figure—who knew Dick Cheney was such a softy?—and that, if caught early, can be “cured.” Dobson also endorses corporal punishment for children. “By learning to yield to the loving authority ... of his parents,” he writes, “a child learns to submit to the other forms of authority which will confront him later in life.” In other words, hit 'em while they're young and they'll suffer your sermons all life long.

Dobson represents a new breed of right-

wing evangelical. He couches the hatred of a Falwell in the folksy, New Age tones of a Dr. Phil, while effectively building a non-sectarian coalition of right-wing religious leaders like some anti-Harold Washington. Add a touch of Ted Turner—Dobson's media empire reaches 200 million people worldwide—and you've got a dangerous demagogue who has Democrats running scared.

They've found comfort in the arms of Jim Wallis, a progressive evangelical and editor of *Sojourners* magazine, who has recently advised both House and Senate Democrats not to abandon faith to the right. Wallis argues that Democratic policies of protecting the environment, helping the poor and questioning the wisdom of an endless war against terror are “convictions [that] come right out of the Bible.” Thus, by explaining their positions in these terms, Democrats can persuade many evangelicals to join them in the fight for social and economic justice.

Wallis urges Democrats to acknowledge the moral dilemmas of abortion and, while not abandoning a woman's right to choose, to focus their rhetoric on policies that aim to reduce it through education, adoption reform and financial support for lower-income women.

His advice, then, is reasonable, intellectually nuanced and morally serious. As such, it is hopelessly removed from the daily stupidities in a culture given to distraction and five-second sound bites. Following his counsel will doom the Democrats to further electoral humiliation. After all, if reason reigned in America, would we be looking down the barrel of Bush's second term?

As Jeff Sharlet recently noted on *KillingtheBuddha.com*, “Religious life in America is for the most part as anti-intellectual as George W. Bush's great defense of the faith: ‘If you don't know, I can't explain it.’” Jesus is less an idea for most Americans than a “feeling, a conviction.” Sharlet traces this “feeling” back to the 18th century evangelical Jonathan Edwards, most famous for the sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.”

This “Angry God” is still what drives most American evangelicals. But, as Tom Frank ably demonstrates in *What's the Matter with Kansas?*, their anger with what Wallis calls “secular fundamentalism” is largely the displaced class resentment of an economically ravaged populace. The way to mobilize this wholly legitimate anger is not to engage the Republicans in a cultural game of “holier than thou,” but to propose real economic solutions. The Democrats—hogtied by their corporate sponsors—haven't honestly done so in years.

For Democrats to win, they need to practice what they preach. To learn how, they shouldn't turn to Jim Wallis but to page 16. ■

Letters

What's Old is New

"Making Connections" is an excellent article (May 9). It summarizes the situation well; past, present and future. I would, however, disagree with the implication and tone of the following:

"Where does this leave progressives? Stuck, as they are, with defending old-fashioned values, such as truth, fair play, factual accuracy, civility, the open exchange of ideas, the power of reasoned debate, and the honor of upholding the public trust."

We progressives are not "stuck" with defending these things. They are the real issues of living. They are our strength, not our weakness. These are not things to debate or talk about. They are what we should live and they should be the underpinning of what we do politically. Crowing about being the "good guys" to their "bad guys" uses their frame of dualistic thinking.

I did not see in the article support for expanding the great work that progressive bloggers are doing in exposing the neocon cabal. I believe that in addition to having a unified face with positive programs and agenda, we need to effectively show the public how they are being scammed through the right-wing-controlled media. I agree with Brad Simmons when he says: "I don't think we should concern ourselves so much with getting into the mainstream media, but rather making our media mainstream—by giving progressive media great financial support."

When you want to succeed at something, you copy the successful people in the field you are entering. Let us study the neocon playbook: Take the best of their successful ideas and use them in our own way. After all, the neocons started



from nothing way back in the 1960s. Remember the Goldwater disaster? These same guys—Wolfowitz, Armitage, Cheney, Rice (later), Kristols *pere* and *fi*ls, Norquist, and the money folks behind them like Coors and Scaife—have been working on their agenda since those "dark" liberal days of the '60s and '70s. Their "success" deserves our utmost attention and education. I am confident we will succeed.

Paul E. Scott
Van Nuys, Calif.

You May Want to Skip Page 32

I first subscribed to *In These Times* more than a year ago because my son had been bringing issues home that featured Kurt Vonnegut, along with many other progressive, left-wing pieces that I greatly enjoyed. The back cover article by Garrison Keillor was wonderful, too, but I found the piece by Margaret Cho to be somewhat offensive and simply inferior to the previous contributions.

However, nothing could have prepared me for the shock of reading Slavoj Zizek's "The Pope's Failures" (May 9). As a matter of fact, I question whether anyone at *In These Times* actually read the piece any farther than the title. If they had, they would have discovered what I did: That 90

percent of the article was not really about the pope's failures but about his "greatness." (Except perhaps for his failure to speak out against sexual abuse by priests—wow! that's a really radical stance.) In fact, in an attempt to divert blame from the pope for the priests' behavior, he attributed their actions to a "counterculture" within the church and went on to defend the church for its reluctance to cooperate with police in their investigations because, after all, the church is right that the molestation of children is the church's internal problem. Further, he expressed the flagrantly white supremacist view that African Americans rewrite their past when they claim that "ancient African empires already had highly developed science and technology." Overall, it is clear that the author could not be any more unenlightened and just plain racist in his views. How could you possibly have allowed this blatantly reactionary piece to be included in an issue that starts out quoting David Brock about the media being skewed to the right and with a plea from the editor and publisher to contribute to *In These Times* in order to "advance the emerging progressive media network"? It is stunningly contradictory and mind-boggling in its irrationality.

I have recently renewed my subscription to *In These Times*, but if this is an indication of the direction that the magazine is taking, I will not be renewing it again in the future.

Shelby J. Seltzer
Lemoyne, Penn.

www.inthesetimes.com

DISCUSSION

Haiti is really what Bush et al want for America: the majority desperately poor and without a safety net, and the rich ever richer, autocratic and supported by "law and order" death squads. If one ignores the very low income of Haiti and compares the distribution of wealth with the United States, one finds the same outlandish skewing of wealth towards the oligarchs and very little for the rest of us. Haiti is the Republican dream state: no minimum wage laws, no health care and the impoverished mass of unemployed surplus labor to do service for the rich. No wonder Dick Cheney hated Aristide so much—Aristide wanted to raise the minimum wage.

Debate online at "Democracy's Death"

You May Want To Jump to Page 40

Pat Aufderheide is wrong to include NPR and PBS in her overview of a promising "public media sector" whose outlets "exist to not to make a profit, not to push an ideology, not to serve customers, but to create a public" ("Too Much Media," May 9). These so-called public networks, in fact, usually push the ideology of their most important customers—the profit-driven corporations that provide them with most of their funding. Far from commercial-free "Little Media," PBS and NPR function as a high-end advertising resource

for the likes of Microsoft, Archer Daniels Midland and now Wal-Mart.

Traditionally a forum for right-wing and corporate perspectives (check out its long history of shows like "Firing Line" and "Wall Street Week"), PBS now boasts a host of new Bush-friendly talk shows, including one featuring the editors of the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page. Studies by Fairness and Accuracy in Media (FAIR) show a consistent three-to-two favoring of Republicans over Democratic sources on NPR, even in 1993, when Democrats controlled all three branches of government.

At the same time, FAIR's research has shown a virtual absence of real progressive or antiwar voices on the radio network. As for NPR's "courageous coverage of the Iraq war," the author must have been listening to broadcasts different from the ones I heard, which sounded as if they could have been press releases from the Pentagon.

The progressive programs Aufderheide cites are the rare exceptions on NPR and PBS. These supposedly public broadcasting organizations can be statistically proven to promote the same right-wing, corporate interests as those heard on networks like MSNBC, ABC and CNN.

Todd Seltzer
Lemoine, Penn.

A Note on the Current Publication Schedule

In recent years, *In These Times* has published 22 times a year, including four double issues. Lately, however, we have been publishing a new issue every three weeks. We have developed that schedule as a way of conserving cash, a necessary step as we move into the summer months, when cash flow is generally lower than at other times of the year. We will also use this extra time to follow up on the planning and implementation of a few strategic initiatives designed to build *In These Times'* audience and impact on democratic discourse. We will return to a more frequent publishing schedule by the fall.

—The Staff of *In These Times*

Give Me a Slice

In regards to Dean Baker's "Numbers Before Politics" (May 9): We should create a TV character, "Pietro the Pie Man," who appears every day with a new pie chart giving proportional statistics on events of the day: sports, education, labor, environment, civil rights, women's rights, rights of children, seniors, non-citizens and, of course, budgets, budgets. Americans should learn to think statistically. Thanks for the article.

Pete Seeger
Beacon, N.Y.

IN THESE TIMES

"With liberty and justice for all..."

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A high school JROTC at the dedication of the WWII Memorial in Washington D.C.



The Children's Crusade

Military programs move into middle schools to fish for future soldiers. By Jennifer Wedekind

TARSHA MOORE STANDS AS TALL AS HER 4-FOOT 8-inch frame will allow. Staring straight ahead, she yells out an order to a squad of peers lined up in three perfect columns next to her. Having been in the military program for six years, Tarsha has earned the rank of captain and is in charge of the 28 boys and girls in her squad. This is Lavizzo Elementary School. Tarsha is 14.

The Middle School Cadet Corps (MSCC) program at the K-8 school is part of a growing trend to militarize middle schools. Students at Lavizzo are among the more than 850 Chicago students who have enlisted in one of the city's 26 MSCC programs. At Madero Middle School, the MSCC has evolved into a full-time military academy for kids 11 to 14 years old.

Chicago public schools are home to the largest Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) program, which oversees the MSCC, in the country.

When moving up to high school, Chicago's graduating eighth-graders can choose from 45 JROTC programs, including three full-time Army military academies, five "school-within-a-school" Army JROTC academies and one JROTC Naval academy.

Proponents of the programs tout leadership training and character development. But critics quote former Defense Secretary Gen. William Cohen, who described JROTC as "one of the best recruiting services that we could have." Rick Mills, the director of Military Schools and JROTC for the Chicago Public School system, dismisses these concerns. "These kinds of programs would not be in schools if there weren't kids who wanted it, parents who supported it and administrators who facilitated it," he says.

The elementary school cadet corps is a voluntary after-school program that meets two or three times a week. Programs differ from school to school, but

MSCC students generally learn first-aid, civics, "citizenship" and character development. They also learn military history and take field trips to local military bases. Once a week, students wear their uniforms to school for inspections. Tarsha describes buffing her uniform shoes in preparation for inspection days. "Everything has to be perfect," she says. During drill practices they learn how to stand, turn and salute in synchronization. When they disobey an order, they do pushups. "Only 10," says one administrator.

Joanne Young, a sixth-grade teacher at Goethe School in Chicago, recently wrote a letter to the local school council protesting the implementation of the cadet corps in her school. "I was told that it is not a military program, yet every aspect of it is military," she wrote. "This program is training our students, as young as 11-years old, to march in formation and carry guns. ... Students could be suspended for bringing something that appears to be a weapon to our school, yet we are handing them fake guns for this program." Young, like many other teachers, feels that leadership and discipline could easily be taught in other types of after-school programs.

Herman Barnett, director of Lavizzo's award-winning MSCC program, asks the public to give the students the benefit of the doubt. "They don't look at it as getting ready for the army," he says. "They're just doing it for entertainment and fun."

In 2002 the Bush administration passed the No Child Left Behind Act with a small, unpublicized provision: Section 9528, "Armed Forces Recruiter Access to Students and Student Recruiting Information," requires high schools to give all student contact information to the military. Most students aren't aware they can opt out by filling out a form.

Ranjit Bhagwat, an organizer for Chicago's Southwest Youth Collaborative, has worked with students at Kelly High School in Chicago to inform their classmates about the provision and how to opt out. The Kelly group, founded in January, has already convinced more than 10 percent of the school's population to sign the opt-out petition. Bhagwat says the group targeted military recruitment because the students felt the military's presence in their school was an issue that needed to be addressed. "They had a problem with the fact that there were a lot of lies the military told," he says.

The MSCC and JROTC programs are

funded by the Defense Department, which has a \$3 billion annual recruitment budget. Recruitment officers roam high schools promoting the image of a secure military career and enticing students with promises of money for college.

The "lies" mentioned by Bhagwat include the reality that, on average, two-thirds of recruits never receive college funding and only 15 percent graduate with a four-year degree. As for a "secure" career, the unemployment rate for veterans is three times higher than non-veterans.

Opponents of the JROTC program also cite ethnic profiling, arguing that the military targets students from minority and low-income areas. The Chicago Public School system is 49.8 percent African American and 38 percent Latino. Students coming from low-income families make up 85.2 percent of Chicago's student population. JROTC director Mills is correct when he says the racial and socioeconomic status of those in Chicago's JROTC program reflects the school system as a whole, but only five schools in all of the more affluent Chicago suburbs have JROTC programs.

Military recruiters are known for their flashy tactics: television ads, omnipresent brochures, recruiting ships, trucks and vans, and even a free Army video game kids can download off the Internet. Yet, the Army hasn't met its recruitment goals in three months. The Marines haven't met their quotas since January. Suspicious recruitment tactics are in the headlines and Army recruiters took off May 20 to retrain in the ethics and laws of recruitment.

Meanwhile, Mills insists the military does not look to JROTC groups for students to boost its numbers. "I get absolutely no pressure from any of the services," he says. "None."

Only 18 percent of graduating JROTC seniors are considering joining the service, says Mills. He does not have statistics on how many of the 71 percent that go on to post-secondary school stay with the ROTC program. Lavizzo's Barnett also says that not all of his middle school students move on to JROTC programs in high school. Tarsha, however, has already signed up. While she wants to be a lawyer and is not planning on joining the armed forces when she graduates, the 14-year-old says, "If I were to join the military, I would be ready for it." ■

IN SHORT

Join the BUY-cott!

Looking for an easy way to protest Bush foreign policy week after week? An easy way to help alleviate global poverty? Buy your gasoline at Citgo stations.

Join me, and tell your friends.

Of the top oil producing and refining countries in the world, only one is a democracy with a president who was elected on a platform of using his nation's oil revenue to benefit the poor. The country is Venezuela. The President is Hugo Chavez. Call him "the Anti-Bush."

Citgo is a U.S. refining and marketing firm that is a wholly owned subsidiary of Venezuela's state-owned oil company. Money you pay at the pump to Citgo goes primarily to Venezuela. There are 14,000 Citgo gas stations in the United States (go to www.citgo.com/citgolocator.jsp to find one near you.) By buying your gasoline at Citgo, you are contributing to the billions of dollars that Venezuela's democratic government is using to provide health care, literacy and education, and to subsidize food for the majority of Venezuelans.

A country with so much oil wealth shouldn't have 60 percent of its people living in poverty, earning less than \$2 per day. With a mass movement behind him, Chavez is confronting poverty in Venezuela. That's why large majorities have consistently backed him in democratic elections. And why the Bush administration supported an attempted military coup in 2002 that sought to overthrow Chavez. So this is the opposite of a boycott. Call it a BUYcott. Spread the word.

Of course, if you can take mass transit or bike or walk to your job, you should do so. And we should all work for political changes that move our country toward a cleaner environment based on renewable energy. The BUYcott is for those of us who don't have a practical alternative to filling up our cars. So get your gas at Citgo. And help fuel a democratic revolution in Venezuela.

—Jeff Cohen

APPALL-O-METER

4.2 My, What a Massive Agenda You Have

Spokane, Wash., Mayor Jim West conformed to a certain type of GOP up-and-comer. A former airborne paratrooper, he mixed a penchant for verbal menace with a zeal for defending the embattled "values" of jerkwater America. As a young state senator, reports the *Spokane Spokesman-Review*, West introduced a bill that would ban gays and lesbians from working in schools and daycare centers, and another criminalizing teenage sex. He characterized an AIDS education pamphlet as "something people go buy at dirty bookstores." In 2002 he mocked his opponent for state senate as an avatar of "Seattle values."

Well, it's no surprise that his Honor had another side to him, one that included less-than-honorable attention paid to male teenagers. The *Spokesman-Review* set up a sting operation to catch West during his habitual rounds in a gay Internet chat room. Posing as a 17-year-old, a consultant hired by the paper was able to lure West into a very compromising online relationship, eventually even bringing the mayor to "full release," as they say. (Astonishingly, the paper did not spare readers the mayor's cybertextual rendering of *la petite morte*. Gotcha journalism never was so cringe-inspiring.)

Another quotable online sentiment from West: "Remember, I'm very closeted. No one knows I like guys. It's just that the openly gay guys

are a little over the top for me. I don't really like the in-your-face attitude some guys have. And the massive political agenda either."

2.8 Terri Who?

You've got to hand it to

GOP strategists for being able to "move on" after stepping in shit. Remember all the heated rhetoric and John Brown-style posturing around the Terri Schiavo case? Satanic judges up-

holding the culture of death? Not quite the message the GOP heavies have in mind for 2006. In a story about the tough road ahead for Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Penn.), who is currently embattled with constituents over Social Security, a *Wall Street Journal* reporter wondered if the senator might suffer for so publicly flogging the Schiavo issue. "There is no way [the Schiavo case] is going to matter in 2006," retorted John Brabender, a consultant for Santorum. "It doesn't touch anybody's life personally."

Startling, considering the source, but true nonetheless.

2.1 Not Our Kind

"There is no finish line," burbles a recent ad campaign for Nike. It's a sentiment your average poor schlub could agree with, although not in the same sense as the company's ideal yuppie consumer. For the poor, in fact, there are no starting blocks. Nike recently decided no longer to supply its shoes to Sears. The giant retailer, you see, has just been acquired by K-Mart. And the thought of Nike shoes in K-Mart is just too unpoetic.

—Dave Mulcahey

Before Sunset

A broad coalition is pushing Congress to rein in the Patriot Act. By David Lindorff

LAST OCTOBER, AGENTS from the FBI and Treasury Department, accompanied by a gaggle of TV news crews, raided the Columbia, Mo., offices of a small charity called the Islamic-American Relief Agency (IARA). Computers and records were seized, and several hundred thousand dollars in donated funds destined for relief work in Kenya were frozen. There were no arrests or charges, though federal agents visited the homes of many of the charity's local donors. IARA, according to its attorney, Shereef Akeel, was effectively shut down under a little-known provision of the USA PATRIOT Act, which expanded the International Emergency Economic Powers Act to allow the government to freeze the assets of organizations while it investigates for links to terrorism.

"The government has not presented one shred of evidence linking IARA to funding for terror, but by seizing their funds and interviewing their donors, they have effectively destroyed the charity and created a chilling effect in the Muslim community in Columbia," Akeel says. He suggests the government may have confused IARA, founded two decades ago as the Islamic African Relief Agency (the name changed during the Bosnia conflict when demands for aid moved beyond an African focus), with a Sudan-based charity called the Islamic African Relief Agency, which the government claims has links to terrorists.

The USA PATRIOT (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools

Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) Act, signed into law six weeks after the 9/11 attacks with no congressional debate, faces review in Congress, as 16 of its provisions "sunset" at the end of the year.

Patriots to Restore Checks and Balances (PRCB), an unusual right/left coalition that includes the ACLU, the American Conservative Union and the Free Congress Foundation, is pressing to end some of the act's particularly egregious civil liberties abuses—specifically, the sneak-and-peek provision, which allows the government to spy on people without notifying them or obtaining a court order, and the library provision, which grants federal authorities the power to inspect library, video, and bookstore user records without a warrant, and which bars librarians and store owners from alerting customers.

ACLU national security lobbyist Lisa Graves says the coalition is optimistic about winning some improvements. "Judiciary Committee Chair Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) held a 'critics' hearing last week," says Graves, "which the last chair, Orrin Hatch, (R-Utah) would never have done, and in the House, Judiciary Chair James Sensenbrenner (R-Wisc.) has expressed some 'concerns' about the act." The nationwide grassroots movement, which has seen 383 communities, including seven states, pass anti-Patriot Act resolutions, has also put pressure on Congress to amend the law.

"I'm guessing the reforms we want in the act could gain some traction," says Steve Lienthal, director of the Center for Privacy and Technology Policy at the Free Congress





PHOTO BY MICHAEL SPRINGER/GETTY IMAGES

Foundation, a conservative member of the coalition. "It will be an uphill battle, but I think we may win."

Not everyone, however, is happy with the notion of reforming the law.

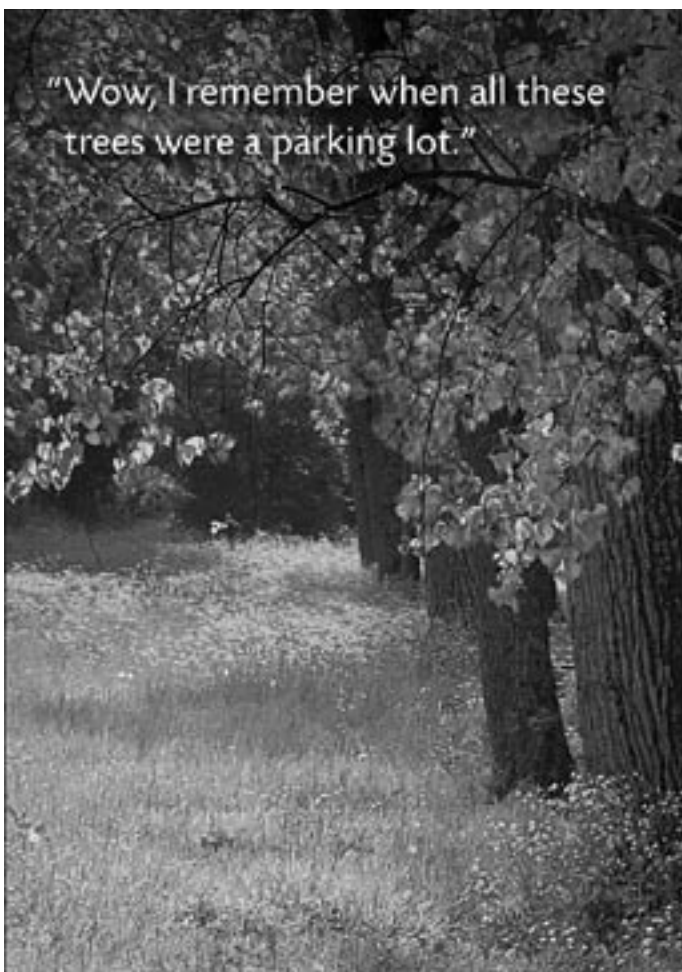
"There's a danger in trying to fix it," argues Michael Ratner, president of the Center for Constitutional Rights, which has not joined the coalition. "I'm afraid by working to fix problems with a few provisions that have gotten attention—the library provision and sneak-and-peek—the focus is taken off of the really serious threats to freedom, both in the Patriot Act and outside it."

"Things like the broadened definition of terror, which can include blocking a highway during a demonstration, or the enhancement of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which now allows the government to spy on ordinary criminal suspects without showing probable cause or obtaining a warrant, are horrible," says Ratner. "Whole Islamic communities in the U.S. now live in terror and fear. It's much worse than the spying on CISPES [Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador] in the '80s."

"Just because 9/11 happened, doesn't mean you need new laws," Ratner says. "The government should have to prove why current laws and powers don't work. It should have to justify each new power given to law enforcement and intelligence agencies. On some things, you have to stand on principle and not compromise."

Graves concedes that Ratner may have a point. "The 9/11 Commission had a similar perspective," she says. "One of their recommendations was that the administration should have the burden of proof for any change in the laws that affect civil liberties." But Graves says that the coalition's—and ACLU's—view is that by joining right and left, they can win at least some improvements, while repealing the PATRIOT Act is not politically possible—at least for now.

Meanwhile, Akeel and the IARA, taking matters in their own hands, have sued in federal court in Washington, D.C., to unblock the charity's funds. "I've been getting letters from little kids in Kenya begging for me to restore the money that was being sent to support them," says Akeel. ■



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Free Speech in Action

The media reform conference offered differences of opinion but a singular resolve. *By Jessica Clark*

ATTEENDEES AT THIS year's National Conference for Media Reform in St. Louis were greeted daily by the gleaming Gateway Arch, a symbol of the new frontier.

And based on the packed corridors at the sold-out conference, the media reform movement is going places—even if the 2,500 attendees at this mid-May conference weren't all traveling in the same direction.

Nonpartisan anti-consolidation activists bumped chests with passionate anti-Republican media monitors. Fierce advocates of public broadcasting went toe-to-toe with Indymedia activists who denounced NPR as "National Propaganda Radio." And both media makers and advocates for diversity and gender equity in media—relegated to caucuses and informal meet-ups at a conference rich in sessions on media activism—groused at organizers from Free Press, the media reform group that made it all happen.

Juan González of the *New York Daily News* and Pacifica Radio's "Democracy Now!" noted that he has been working in both media reform and minority organizations for many years, and wishes the former were more multicultural and the latter more radical. "Progress is not keeping pace with the times on either side," he said. This theme echoed throughout the conference, intersecting with debates over what activists should pursue: media "reform," "justice," "democracy," or "revolution"? "We cannot have a media democracy without social justice," argued



Rocker Patti Smith speaks with John Nichols of Free Press

Sydney Levy of Media Alliance, a San Francisco resource center for media workers and activists. "There is no free press without freedom for people who are oppressed."

Publishers, producers and writers struggled for a toehold at the conference, seeking to understand how once-arcaic policy struggles over broadband licenses and ownership limits have reconfigured the swiftly changing media landscape. Conversations about new online and viral distribution systems for digital video and audio dovetailed neatly with policy discussions about the need to protect broadband pipelines and community Internet from commercial predation. Activists from cities around the country shared stories of working to secure free Internet access in order to spur local economic development and bridge the digital divide. (See "Is Cheap Broadband UnAmerican?" May 9.)

The potential of such developments to dramatically cut the cost of media distribution

is exciting, but the question of how content might be funded remained unanswered.

"I can't emphasize enough the importance of building an infrastructure and support for independent media," said Linda Jue of the Independent Press Association. That media will have to do its job as well, passing what Adam Werbach of Common Assets termed "the dinner conversation challenge"—providing content that's engaging as well as political. And it must stay true to its roots. "We've cast light, we've created heat," said writer and radio host Laura Flanders. "But will this new [independent] media remain accountable to the movement that called it forth?"

Despite their multiple approaches, most conference-goers seemed to find the event both valuable and motivating. "If people can't stand under the same umbrella, should the movement just stop?" asked Glen Ford, co-publisher of *The Black Commentator*, an online publication. "Stand-

ing under the umbrella and believing that this is the place to be means not moving forward. There's energy in this conference, and we need to harness the forward motion."

Conservative attempts to dominate mainstream media also brought attendees together. The Institute for Public Accuracy's Norman Solomon criticized the "warnography" that characterizes much of the reporting on the Iraq conflict. Author and activist Naomi Klein noted, "We have more than enough facts to bring down this government every week, but we lack amplification." One-time conservative David Brock of Media Matters for America explained that his group is "attempting to organize the progressive base so that the media can hear from us every day."

Brock's group is just one of several media reform projects that have blossomed since the first conference in November 2003. A few standouts from this year include a multi-organization campaign spearheaded by Common Cause to promote a "Bill of Media Rights" (www.citizenrights.org); an ambitious project by Consumers Union called Hear Us Now (www.hearusnow.org) that offers citizens an accessible guide to the tangle of media, technology and communications issues; and Project: Think Different (www.projectthinkdifferent.org/), which works with students and artists to create pop culture that promotes civic dialogue and action.

"This has been a remarkable event," said Free Press Field Organizer Amanda Ballantyne. "This has made me so confident that this movement is going to prevail." ■

To download audio recordings of conference sessions, visit <http://www.freepress.net/conference/>.

The Real Memogate

By 2002, the fix was in on U.S. and U.K. plans for war. *By Solomon Hughes*

PRESIDENT BUSH GRATEFULLY received Tony Blair's support for the invasion of Iraq, but that relationship may now be turning sour. As antiwar feeling runs high in Britain, recently leaked secret official documents show both the U.S. and U.K. governments conspired to cook up a case for a pre-planned Iraq war.

Days before the British general election, the *Sunday Times* published a "Secret and Strictly Personal—UK Eyes Only" document written in July 2002 by one of Blair's aides revealing U.S. and U.K. war plans.

The memo details a meeting between Blair and his top officials, during which "C" reported on his recent talks in Washington. "C" is the code name for the Chief of MI6, Britain's Intelligence service. "C," also known as Sir David Spedding, said, "There was a perceptible shift in attitude among America's political leaders. ... Military action was now seen as inevitable. Bush wanted to remove Saddam thorough military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. But the intelligence and the facts are being fixed around the policy."

The memo sparked front page news in the United Kingdom. The U.S. press was slow to pick up the story, but 88 members of Congress co-signed a letter to Bush written by Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) demanding an inquiry into the document's revelations.

At the 2002 meeting, the memo reveals that British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said, "It seemed clear that Bush had made up his mind to take military action." However,



LUKE FRAZZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Straw was also not convinced by the WMD argument, saying, "Saddam was not threatening his neighbours, and his WMD capability was less than that of Libya, North Korea or Iran." In public, Straw supported the official claim that Iraq's WMDs posed a threat that justified war.

The memo also shows that planning for postwar Iraq was woefully inadequate and the legal case for war was dubious. The British Intelligence chief reported, "There was little discussion in Washington of the aftermath after military action." Attorney General Lord Goldsmith, the British Government's top legal officer warned meeting attendees, "The desire for regime change was not a legal base for military action." Subsequent leaks show Goldsmith turned around and gave a legal thumbs-up for war, but only after a gruelling February 2003 session with then-presidential legal adviser Alberto Gonzales.

This is the latest in a flood of leaks undermining the war's justification, including the 2003

revelations by British weapons inspector David Kelly that the Iraqi mobile bio-war labs highlighted by Colin Powell were really military weather balloon inflators, and by intelligence translator Katherine Gun, who revealed that GCHQ, Britain's surveillance center, was spying on delegations to the U.N. Security Council at the request of the U.S. National Security Agency in an attempt to win U.N. support for invasion.

In September 2004, other secret documents revealing shared war planning were passed to the *Telegraph*. A March 2002 memo to Blair from his top aide, Sir David Manning, reported that he dined with Condoleezza Rice, and told her that Blair "would not budge in [his] support for regime change" at a time when Blair was about to "visit the ranch" for talks with Bush.

In a March 2002 memo, U.K. ambassador to Washington Sir Christopher Meyer recounts to David Manning another dinner date—this time with Paul Wolfowitz. The after-dinner conversation shows that

the plan for war was fixed and only the "selling" of the issue remained: "We backed regime change but the plan had to be clever [because] it would be a tough sell for us domestically and probably tougher elsewhere in Europe."

These leaks occurred against a background of anti-war demonstrations throughout the United Kingdom, and Iraq and the lies about WMD were a major issue in Britain's recent general election. Labour lost votes as the Liberal Democrats promoted a left-tinged antiwar ticket. Nationally, Labour tried to avoid Iraq, a stance mocked as "don't mention the war." George Galloway, expelled from the Labour Party because of his position on Iraq, was re-elected to Parliament as a representative of the newly formed, antiwar Respect Coalition.

On May 17, Galloway testified before the U.S. Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. In response to a question from the chairman, Sen. Norm Coleman (R-Minn.), Galloway said:

Senator, in everything I said about Iraq, I turned out to be right and you turned out to be wrong and 100,000 people paid with their lives. ... If the world had listened to Kofi Annan, whose dismissal you demanded, if the world had listened to President Chirac, who you want to paint as some kind of corrupt traitor, if the world had listened to me and the antiwar movement in Britain, we would not be in the disaster that we are in today. ■

SOLOMON HUGHES, a freelance journalist, has written on the Iraq War and its aftermath for the *Observer* and *Independent* on Sunday of London.

The Gossip

By Emily Udell

“To speak behind others’ backs is the ventilator of the heart.”

This pearl of wisdom from Marjane Satrapi’s grandmother propels Satrapi’s new graphic memoir, *Embroideries*, which recounts the conversation of a group of Iranian women over tea. The women at the center of *Embroideries* include Satrapi’s family, friends, neighbors and the author herself. Their discussions of love, marriage and sex open a window into the culture and sexual politics of Iran.

Satrapi was born in Rasht, Iran, in 1969, and her first graphic memoir *Persepolis* documents her life in Tehran from 1974 to 1983, where she witnessed the Islamic Revolution firsthand. The book’s sequel, *Persepolis 2*, continues her tale—the years she spent abroad in Austria and her return to Tehran, where she attended university to study art and lived under the rule of the

mullahs. The book chronicles the years from 1984 until her preparation for a second move abroad in 1994.

Satrapi’s simple black and white drawings, and the combination of personal and political themes in the memoirs, earned her books comparisons to the Pulitzer Prize-winning comic artist Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* and *Maus II*, in which Spiegelman documents his father’s experiences during the Holocaust. Journalists made the comparison so many times that Satrapi actually called Spiegelman in 2003 to apologize, and their conversation marked the beginning of a close friendship.

Like Spiegelman, Satrapi loves to smoke, and is appalled by the restrictions on smoking in the United States. “In France, you can smoke everywhere!” she exclaims. Satrapi is articulate (even in English, which is her fourth language), and her conversation is peppered with jokes and bemused observations about politics and people. “There is a big part of Iranian life that is based on humor. People love to sit and talk and tell really funny stories and make fun of each other and make fun of other people. I wanted to write a book about this part of Iran that you cannot so much see and taste in *Persepolis*,” says Satrapi, who has lived for the past 11 years in Paris, where *Embroideries* was originally published (between *Persepolis* and *Persepolis 2*). Satrapi has not returned to Iran, where her parents still reside, since the publication of her first book.

Stylistically, *Embroideries* departs from the *Persepolis* memoirs. She dispenses with the panel format that characterizes those books, allowing multiple scenes to happen on a page. “I wanted the form to be as fluid as the conversation itself,” she says. “I wanted the reader to feel the conversation, even in the way the book was made.”

Satrapi’s intended audience is not Iranians, but people who are unfamiliar with—or have stereotypes about—Iran, Iranian women and Iranian culture. The women portrayed in *Embroideries* are incredibly candid and irreverent about sex, which has surprised some readers in the United States and Europe. “I had someone who told me, ‘We didn’t know that Iranian women had a sexual life,’” says Satrapi. “Can you believe that? The population of Iran has doubled in the last 25 years!”

The humor at the heart of Satrapi’s books reflects Iranian culture, Satrapi herself and her outlook on life. “Nothing is as subversive as laughing,” says Satrapi. And laughing is something the women in *Embroideries* do. They laugh at everything from the male sexual organ to themselves. Despite living in an overtly patriarchal society, Satrapi wanted to show that Iranian women have a substantial measure of power and a great deal of fun. “I have never seen any Iranian woman as a martyr,” says Satrapi. “I never thought of my mother or grandmother as being no one. They were real people. And they had a real character and power. And that is the way I see Iranian women.” She says, “I hate the way people outside talk about us, like ‘Oh, you poor thing, you are miserable.’ We are not miserable at all.”

“Comic art,” “visual journalism” and “graphic memoir” are a few of the terms that have been applied to Satrapi’s work. Yet Satrapi won’t be pigeon-holed. “I do what I do,” she says with a shrug. Satrapi admits that her books allow her to ventilate her own heart. “I try not to solve my problems through my books,” she says—her stories are true accounts, but the identities of most of her characters are camouflaged. “But, oh my God, I love the gossip!” ■



To hear an audio interview with Satrapi, visit fireontheprairie.com. In *These Times*' monthly radio show.



Millions More Amassing

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY'S "FULL SPECTRUM dominance" of the national government and most of the corporate media has produced an anxious mood within the African-American community. Conditions are so bleak in so many areas we seem on the verge of a social emergency.

A sense of impending crisis has jump-started efforts to unify the black community. Last month at the National Press Club in Washington D.C., a diverse group of black leaders announced that as the next step in this unity campaign, the 10th anniversary commemoration of the Million Man March will be transformed into the Millions More Movement.

"This is a movement, not just a march," said the Rev. Willie F. Wilson, pastor of the Union Temple Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., and executive director of the event. An ongoing "movement is needed to help the downtrodden among us," he told those assembled, adding it was time for a "spiritual, economic and social rebirth in communities that many have given up as lost."

The event, scheduled for October 14-16 in the nation's capital, was conceived by Minister Louis Farrakhan, the controversial leader of the Nation of Islam (NOI); Farrakhan also was the architect of the October 16, 1995 Million Man March.

There are more than 100 conveners, including the Revs. Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, NAACP Chairman Julian Bond, author/commentator Julianne Malveaux, hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons and Vashti McKenzie, the bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Firming up Farrakhan's radical flank is convener Malik Zulu Shabazz, leader of the New Black Panther Party. Although the list is extraordinarily broad-based and ecumenical, the event has already drawn criticism, primarily because of Farrakhan's involvement.

"It's very sad that the only leader the African-American community can find to rally around is an unrepentant bigot, an anti-Semite who still holds to his views," says Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). The ADL has taken the lead in denouncing the event but other organizations may share Foxman's distress about Farrakhan's leadership. Farrakhan supporters contend he no longer holds racist and anti-semitic views.

The fiery NOI leader's role in the 1995 march also tarnished that effort in the eyes of many, preventing several black leaders from lending support to the gathering. But after witnessing the spectacle of hundreds

of thousands of black men gathered in fraternity and peace, a number of African-American leaders retroactively jumped on the bandwagon.

The Million Man March was deemed a huge success by many in the black community. Most accounts in the black media estimated that at least two million men attended. However, the event was criticized by leading black feminists for its gender exclusivity, its focus on abstract notions like "atonement" rather than on issues of social injustice, and its lack of programmatic follow-through.

Supporters were also reluctant to concede they squandered some of the march's potential by failing to amass a database of participants, propose a specific agenda or design a fund-raising mechanism.

Organizers of the Millions More Movement apparently took their cue from those criticisms. This event will be much more inclusive: Women, children, gays and other races all are welcome. "This will be a coalition of national leaders working to create a framework that goes beyond just marching to actually making fundamental changes," Chae Carrier, a Millions More Movement spokesperson, told Blackamericaweb.com.

Accordingly, the mission statement of the movement lists an overall agenda and a number of demands. All aspects of community development are included in a vague list of agenda items, such as educational development, economic development and political development. The demands include an end to police brutality, racial profiling and substandard education.

For several years, Farrakhan has been trying to transform his image from that of an intransigent black supremacist to that of an avuncular, social conciliator. He's sought to intervene in a variety of social hot spots, including truce efforts between warring street gangs, reconciling rap "beefs" and confronting the scourge of black-on-black crime through the NOI's anti-crime campaigns. He's also reconciled with his critics in the Muslim world who once argued that the NOI's race-based doctrine was Islamic sacrilege.

Apparently his image has been rehabilitated enough to attract a wide range of supporters to his latest brainchild. Malveaux, the feminist whose car was vandalized following her vehement criticism of the Million Man March, applauded Farrakhan's new attitude. "This time, Minister Farrakhan has brought us language which is unifying. He's evolved, our people have evolved, the movement has evolved and we're moving forward." ■

Organizers of the Millions More Movement took their cues from criticism of the 1995 Million Man March.

SALIM MUWAKKIL is a senior editor at *In These Times*, a contributing columnist to the *Chicago Tribune* and a *Crime and Communities Media Fellow* of the *Open Society Institute*.



Viewpoint *By Jerry Starr*

A State-Run News Service?

Planting conservatives on the board may be the most effective tactic yet in the long struggle to kill public broadcasting.

PUBLIC BROADCASTING IS THE LATEST FRONT in the Republican majority's assault on the "liberal" media.

After years of trying to destroy public broadcasting from without, right-wing Republicans are now trying to do so from within, by planting aggressive conservatives on the board and staff. These people have no qualms about destroying the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's (CPB) function as a "heat shield" from governmental influence. Rather, they seem bent on turning public broadcasting into a heat source—a censorship center.

This may be the most effective tactic yet in the longstanding struggle to kill public broadcasting. CPB, while only providing 15 percent of the total funding of public broadcasting, has a powerful leveraging function. It provides important operating money for its 350 member TV stations, and crucial producing funds for PBS. NPR depends on the money its member stations give it for programming, and those stations get a significant portion of their basic operating funds from CPB.

At the center of this current controversy are veteran broadcast journalist Bill Moyers and CPB board chair Kenneth Tomlinson, who ran Voice of America during the Reagan administration. (See "The Battle Over PBS" by Bill Moyers on page 40.)

Angered by criticism of the Republican Party on Bill Moyers' "NOW," Tomlinson promoted the development of two conservative opinion shows. One was hosted by Tucker Carlson and the other featured the staff of the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page. Tomlinson has claimed that all he wants is to "balance" Moyers. But prominent journalists Carl Stern and Marvin Kalb have told colleagues on PBS's Editorial Standards Review Committee that CPB's advocacy for "ideological balance" has compromised PBS's editorial integrity.

Earlier this year, Kathleen Cox was abruptly dropped as CPB president and temporarily replaced by Ken Ferree, a top adviser to former FCC chair Michael Powell and a supporter of greater media consolidation. Tomlinson now is touting Patricia Harrison, a former co-chair of the Republican National Committee, for the permanent position.

Without consulting PBS, CPB broke new ground by appointing a committee of two, one of them Tomlinson's former executive editor at *Reader's Digest*, to review all PBS news and public affairs programs for "objectivity" and "balance." In an internal memo,

PBS general counsel described this as "government encroachment on ... content, potentially in violation of the First Amendment."

CPB's own studies, conducted by professional pollsters in 2002 and 2003 (before Tomlinson took over), found that PBS was rated more trusted, fair and balanced than any other broadcaster. Unsatisfied, Tomlinson paid \$10,000 to a personal associate to analyze Moyers' program (which frequently interviews conservatives), placing guests in categories like "anti-Bush," "anti-business," and "anti-Tom DeLay." The results of that analysis are not known because, as *Television Week* TV critic Tom Shales wrote, Tomlinson "had the report locked away in a drawer, stamped it 'confidential,' and now pretends it doesn't exist."

In its current contract with PBS, the CPB pledged to provide \$22.5 million a year (about 20 percent of its funding) for two years on the condition that PBS adopt editorial guidelines and standards, provide copies of those guidelines to the board, and not invest "CPB funds in programs of a controversial nature" that fail to meet congressionally mandated standards for balance and objectivity. While this agreement was a compromise from CPB's previous demand that PBS submit its programming for approval, it is nonetheless a victory for Tomlinson and his fellow Republican board members.

A progressive response is rapidly emerging. On May 10-15, some 2,500 people gathered in St. Louis for the National Conference for Media Reform. (See "Free Speech in Action," page 10) On behalf of Citizens for Independent Public Broadcasting (cipbonline.org), I presented our proposal to restructure public broadcasting as an independently funded public trust.

Ernest Wilson, one of the CPB's two Democratic board members, advised attendees: "The change needed cannot come from inside the Beltway. It's got to come from the people in this room and in your communities." Already, more than 70,000 Americans have signed the Free Press petition calling on Tomlinson to resign and demanding that "the public be put back into PBS." At present, Free Press and Common Cause are spearheading a movement to challenge this assault on PBS and NPR. Among the initiatives will be town meetings held across the nation. Advocates are seeking public broadcasting that includes alternative voices rather than justifies their exclusion; that reflects on power, not simply reflects power. ■

JERRY STARR is Executive Director of Citizens for Independent Public Broadcasting (cipbonline.org), a national membership organization to put the public interest into public broadcasting..



Jesus, Is This News?

NO MATTER HOW MUCH COLUMNISTS and media critics bemoan the sorry state of American journalism, no matter how low the press sinks in the estimation of the American people, the news media, particularly on television, remains defiantly abysmal. Now, on top of the usual toxic doses of runaway brides, irrelevant celebrity trials and President Bush holding hands with Crown Prince Abdullah, we have the rise of Jesus News.

Blinded by their own erroneous news frame that the last election was all about “moral values,” and pressured to give religion more coverage by an evangelical right running on methamphetamines, the news media are devoting more airtime to everything Jesus.

The ghoulish death watch of Pope Paul John II (“Is he dead yet?” “No, Bob, not dead yet, back to you.”) hogged nearly an hour of total news time on the three networks from March 28-April 1, and his death and funeral preparations garnered 129 minutes of network news attention the following week, making it the year’s third biggest story so far. By contrast, that same week, Tom Delay’s ethics problems received four minutes of coverage on ABC and CBS combined, and none on NBC. By the week of April 18-22, when the networks devoted 37 minutes to the Conclave of Cardinals (“Is the smoke white or black, Bob?”) and another 32 minutes to the election of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as the new pope, one might have thought Catholicism had become our state religion.

The week of May 2, ABC news inaugurated a series called “Under God,” about how conservative Christians are “searching for new ways to make their mark on popular culture.” First up was a story about Christian cheerleading camps, and the next day a story about how Christians like to spank their kids. By the time Thursday’s episode, “Faith and Fashion Under God” aired, one sensed that some at ABC had been a bit hoodwinked. Here we learned that “a growing number of people, especially young people, are proudly wearing their beliefs.” Cut to a picture of the campy baseball cap that has a picture of Jesus on it and reads, “Jesus is my Homeboy.”

My daughter has that cap; so do quite a few of her friends. They have it because they find it hilarious and irreverent. It is the ironic juxtaposition of hip hop slang with evangelism that they love; the last thing they are doing is “wearing their beliefs.”

And then there’s Fox News. It routinely traffics

in interviews with folks like the Reverend Franklin Graham, whose newsworthy pronouncements include “Jesus ... came to this Earth to take sinners and save us from our sins ... [we need to] receive Christ by faith.” Fox is the platform from which James Dobson of Focus on the Family can accuse Democratic Senators of being, well, the infidel. Not to be outdone, NBC’s “Dateline” with Stone Phillips had a story about an exorcism to rid a man of demons.

What are we to make of the rise of Jesus news? Yes, it is indeed important to know what the religious right is up to, especially as they seek to pack the courts with Jesus freaks, outlaw the teaching of evolution, reverse decades of environmental regulation because “the rapture” is just around the corner, and suppress free speech and academic freedom on college campuses by charging that evangelical students are “silenced” and “harassed” and thus should be able to sue.

But that’s not the detailed coverage we’re getting, at least not on TV. Instead, Jesus news embezzles time away from stories people really need to hear, like much more detailed coverage of the Bush/Republican energy bill, which got a total of six minutes of coverage from all three networks when it passed the house the week of April 18.

Not to mention local news. Here in Michigan, we are contemplating, and not without bitterness, the famous 1955 quotation from Charlie Wilson who said of his company “What’s good for General Motors is good for the rest of America.” In that year, GM sold over half of the cars purchased in the United States. Today, GM has been downgraded to junk bond status. The company’s arrogant, willful myopia, which has kept it producing gas-guzzling, poorly designed, undesirable cars, could very well lead to a major fiscal disaster in Michigan and elsewhere. But except for the business pages, (and the Detroit News and Free Press), this has not gotten near the attention that the religious invocations used at NASCAR rallies has.

The parade of evangelicals on TV exaggerates the numbers of these folks and makes them seem much more influential than they are—or certainly should be. Rather than clones of the Christian Broadcasting Network, we need solid, investigative work about the money, organizations and, indeed, the cynicism behind all of these crusading efforts to turn our country into a giant Bible camp. ■

Blinded by their own erroneous news frame that the last election was all about “moral values,” the news media are devoting more airtime to everything Jesus.

SUSAN DOUGLAS is a senior editor at *In These Times*, a contributing columnist to the *Chicago Tribune* and a *Crime and Communities Media Fellow* of the *Open Society Institute*.

Sanders Steps Up

The representative for the rest of us sets his sights on the Senate.

BY JOEL BLEIFUSS



REP. BERNIE SANDERS (I-Vt.) HAS said that he plans to seek the Vermont Senate seat being vacated by Sen. Jim Jeffords (I-Vt.) in 2006.

Judging from his popularity, Sanders' election is all but assured. If he takes office, he will become the Senate's most progressive member.

In These Times has been following Sanders for 24 years. In March 1981, when he was elected mayor of Burlington, Alan D. Abbey wrote:

The poor and disenfranchised in Vermont's largest city have something to cheer about with the surprise election of Bernard Sanders as mayor. A left political activist with a commitment to social and economic justice, Sanders toppled a five-term conservative Democratic incumbent. ... The 39-year-old Sanders, a Brooklyn native, built a political coalition unprecedented in rural Vermont. It included low-income working people, public housing tenants, the elderly, community organizations, college faculty and disgruntled city workers.

Two years later, *In These Times* covered his re-election. David Moberg wrote:

On March 1, 1983, with a voter turnout that jumped more than 50 percent above usual municipal elections, Sanders swamped his Democratic and Republican rivals with 52 percent of the vote. ...

"Politics is not dissimilar to art," Sanders said as he reflected on his recent victory. "What is it that makes a great novel or film different from a fair novel or film? In a sense you've got to inspire the people, and you've got to talk to them where they're at today. ... People have got to develop confidence in themselves. They've got to believe they can do it. ... I'm elected because I probably knocked on more doors than anybody in the history of Burlington. ... You can't be afraid of the people—and you've got people who sit around talking continually about the people, the people, the people, but God forbid they'll ever go out and knock on a door." ...

At the Suds City Laundromat in Burlington's Old North End, a blue-collar Sanders stronghold, Massie, a 27-year-old truck driver who had lived in Burlington 10 years but wore a cowboy hat and a Texas shirt with an armadillo on it, said, "Sanders was the only guy who made any sense in this town in the past 10 years. ... If Reagan listened like Bernie does, the country would be better. He cares about the environment, the work situation, how you make a living, if you're down and out. It's a good, positive attitude for city government. So far, what I have seen of [his socialism] I like. I don't

consider him a communist or anything like that. I think it's an idea of getting people to work together, to stop a segregated society with the upper crust and lower class."

In 1990, Mayor Sanders ran for Vermont's lone U.S. House seat, a race he had lost by 3 percentage points in 1988. Kevin J. Kelley, reported on that election for *In These Times*:

Sanders ousted first-term Republican incumbent Peter Smith by a whopping 18 percentage point margin [57 to 39 percent] ... Sanders succeeded November 6 by replicating on a statewide level the coalition that enabled him to win four terms as Burlington mayor by increasingly comfortable margins. Beginning with a base of ideologically committed and well-educated young

... We should not be surprised that the president has refused to lead the effort for real campaign finance reform. ...

The Progressive Caucus will urge President Clinton to take the lead in explaining to the American people why the "Contract with America" will be a disaster for the elderly, workers, veterans, women, minorities, students, the poor and our environment. ...

Yes, the wealthy control the media and exert a dominant influence over the political and economic life of the nation. But 95 percent of the American people are not wealthy. Clinton's political future, and the defeat of right-wing Republicanism, rest on his ability to understand this simple point—and to make it clear to the ordinary people of this country, that he is on their side.

What we really have got to do is bring about a fundamental political change in this country.

and middle-aged voters, Sanders fashioned a strong appeal to working-class and older Vermonters, many of whom normally vote for Republicans. It is this singular ability to find support across cultural lines that accounts for the first congressional victory by an independent socialist in over 40 years. ... Smith committed a fatal error. His campaign aired a TV ad questioning his opponent's patriotism and charging that Sanders' socialist beliefs were inconsistent with "Vermont values." ... That caused a tight race to become a rout. ... Attempting to portray Sanders as a closet communist was a particularly stupid maneuver since even many of his staunchest opponents have come to regard Sanders with grudging respect. After 20 years of tireless campaigning, Vermonters know that Bernie Sanders' agenda is anything but hidden.

Once in Washington, Rep. Bernie Sanders founded the Progressive Caucus, which now numbers 54 members. Following the disastrous 1994 mid-term election, Sanders wrote an essay in *In These Times*, "Wake Up Call," in which he said:

Has Clinton been a better president than Reagan or Bush? Yes. Have his policies begun to seriously address the enormous problems facing our nation? No. Has he tried to build a political movement that would empower working people so they could make real improvements in their lives? Absolutely not. Clinton and his party depend on corporate money and the support of wealthy donors.

In recent years, Sanders has appeared in *In These Times* as a contributor to the magazine's "House Call" column. We caught up with him in St. Louis at the National Conference for Media Reform (where he was received with a standing ovation) and asked about his plans for the future.

If elected, or should I say when elected, what kind of leadership will you bring to the U.S. Senate?

If I'm elected to the U.S. Senate, I think it would be fair to say that I'll be the most progressive voice in the Senate and that I will continue to do the work that I did in the House. There are many huge issues out there, but my major emphasis will be on economic issues and addressing what I consider to be the collapse of the middle class: the fact that despite the huge increases in productivity and technology, the average American worker is worse off today than he or she was 30 years ago. It's important that Congress and the media start focusing on that reality: the growing gap between the rich and poor, the increase in poverty, our disastrous trade policy, the fact that we're the only country in the industrialized world that doesn't have a national health care program and the increasingly regressive tax structure. Those are some of the issues I'll be talking about and talking about very loudly.

A few Democratic senators have brought up some of these issues. How will you be different?

My intention is to work with grassroots organizations, trade unions, environmental groups and active citizens' organizations to try to revitalize American democracy. It's obvious that one person or even five or 10 people in the U.S. Senate cannot do it alone.

What we really have got to do is bring about a fundamental political change in this country. We need to change political consciousness and focus on the reality that many working people are voting against their own economic interests because political leaders are not speaking to the interests of working people. My goal is to form a new relationship between grassroots America and Washington, to coordinate activities, and to create what the vast majority of people in this country want—economic justice and not a government run by the very, very wealthy. It's going to take a lot of work. It's not going to happen overnight. But that's my goal.

Why do you think the Congress never talks about issues of economic inequality or debates trade policies?

That's a very good question and the answer is quite sad: To a very significant degree, big money interests control Washington. I can document for you exactly the people who pay for legislation that comes on the floor of the House, whether it's the so-called energy bill that is paid for by the coal companies, the oil companies and the nuclear power companies; whether it's this obscene repeal of the inheritance tax that is paid for by billionaires; whether it's the



throw huge amounts of money against you.

I was the first member of Congress to take constituents over the Canadian border to expose the reality that, in Canada, people pay a fraction of the price that we pay for prescription drugs. A number of elected officials who have also been doing that have been slapped around by the pharmaceutical industry, which has limitless sums of money to put into campaigns. People are terrified of standing up to big money because they'll be punished through campaign advertising at election time.

Over the years you've developed a strong base among working people in Vermont, a base that has ensured your re-election. How can other progressives running for public office do the same?

protect some of the most vulnerable people in our state, the people who don't make large contributions to the Republican Party. I've helped lead the effort against our disastrous trade policies and have protected the pensions of thousands of Vermont workers. My office has brought a federal program into the state which provides good nutrition for over 5,000 lower-income seniors, we've helped develop federally qualified community health centers and dental clinics that provide medical and dental care for people all over the state. I've held dozens of meetings for Vermont veterans, helping many of them get the benefits to which they're entitled. People in Vermont recognize that while they may disagree with me on this or that issue, I spend the bulk of my time fighting for their rights and that we have had some very significant accomplishments.

Too often, people on the left look at cultural issues as the most important issues. They are important, but we have to appreciate the reality that tens of millions of people are struggling hard just to keep their heads above water economically. They either have no health insurance or they are paying much more than they can afford for health insurance. They're desperately trying to get a decent education for their kids. They're scared to death about whether their pension is going to be there when they retire. To a large degree we've ignored those people. It's important that we reach out to them and let them know that we know what they're going through and that we're going to change the system. It is not acceptable that America is the only country in the industrialized world without national health care. It

Too often, people on the left look at cultural issues as the most important issues. They are important, but we have to appreciate the reality that tens of millions of people are struggling hard just to keep their heads above water economically.

bankruptcy bill or whatever it may be.

Big money has unbelievable power in Washington. They control the debate. Especially right now, where you have an administration that works hand-in-glove with the wealthiest people in America and the largest corporations. There is timidity in Congress, even fear, that if you speak up they're going to

When I was mayor of Burlington, low-income and working people supported me because they knew that I was fighting for their interests and succeeding. We significantly transformed working-class neighborhoods, provided programs for the kids and the elderly, and built affordable housing. As a congressman, I've worked hard to

is not acceptable that we haven't raised the minimum wage in 10 years to a living wage, that we haven't addressed the major crisis in affordable housing. Homelessness is a problem, sure, but a bigger problem is that millions of people are spending 50 percent of their limited incomes on housing. When you are forced to do that, how do you have money to provide the basics for your family? The middle class in America is collapsing. And it's about time we started addressing that reality.

From what you just said, I assume that you think John Kerry could have run a better campaign in 2004.

I don't think John Kerry ran a bad campaign. Obviously they made some mistakes, like not responding quickly to those vicious lies about his record in Vietnam. But the problem with John Kerry's campaign was John Kerry's record and there was nothing they could do about that.

I'm convinced that if he had voted against NAFTA and if he had not voted for permanent normal trade relations with China, John Kerry would be president of the United States today. He came up with an approach of not giving tax breaks to companies that go abroad, but the real issue was our trade policy, and he voted the wrong way. Of course he wasn't alone. Bill Clinton gave us NAFTA.

The trade issue is a huge issue. We're losing millions of decent paying jobs, not just blue-collar jobs, but white-collar information technology jobs as well. We're seeing the conversion of our economy from a General Motors economy to a Wal-Mart economy. And we're also seeing the sellout of our country by the CEOs of large corporations. These CEOs, whose companies have become enormously wealthy and profitable on the backs of American workers and consumers, are now moving abroad and pushing us into a race to the bottom as fast as they can. It's simply not acceptable that these CEOs, who make 500 times what their employees earn, are reducing us to a third world economy. It's not acceptable that CEOs like Jeffrey Immelt, the CEO of General Electric said, "When I'm talking to GE managers, I talk China, China, China, China, China."

For years we were told how terrible communism was and how we had to be anti-communist. But now these guys love China! They love authoritarianism. They love the reality that they can pay desper-

ate workers in China 30 cents an hour and send them to jail if they stand up for a union. Who's talking about that issue?

I get on FOX television, every now and then, and they made a mistake the last time I was on and allowed me to talk about trade. When I got back to the office the next day, I had 50 e-mails and 95 percent of them said, "I'm a conservative Republican and you're absolutely right about the issue of trade. Bush's policies are an absolute disaster." That's from conservative Republicans.

If, when, you're elected senator are you

How many more years will we be in Iraq, how many more Americans will be dying there, how many more billions will we be spending? The president doesn't talk about that and that is not acceptable.

afraid of being red-baited and marginalized by the cable networks?

Afraid of being red-baited? I'm being red-baited already. Everybody in Vermont knows that I'm a democratic socialist. It's so well known that nobody talks about it anymore. But suddenly, now all over the national media, it's socialist, socialist, socialist. Believe me, they'll be talking about the Socialist-Democratic Caucus if I'm elected. Of course the Republicans and the corporate media are going to red-bait me. The Republican Party is so bankrupt in terms of ideas that they have nothing to say on health care, the economy, education, the environment or the real issues that affect the American people. All they can do is wage smear campaigns and wars of personal destruction. Do we expect that? Of course we do.

What is being said about the war in Iraq in Congress? It seems to be spiraling even further out of control and there has not been a forceful, strong movement about getting out of Iraq.

I not only voted against giving the president the authority to go to war, I was one of the leaders in opposition to the war. Needless to say, I was far from alone. In fairness to Democrats, many Americans don't know that a majority of House Democrats voted against giving the president the authority to go to war. I must say that in covering opposition to the war, both at the grassroots level

and in Congress, the corporate media was terrible. Opposition thought and the extent of the opposition was very poorly covered.

The issue today, of course, is what do we do now? The answer, I believe, is to go back to what Vermont's Republican Senator, George Aiken, said in the '70s about Vietnam: "Declare victory and get out." I recently voted against the \$82 billion supplementary funding for Iraq because the president has not said one word about an exit strategy, about when our troops are coming home. How many more years will we be in Iraq, how many more Americans

will be dying there, how many more billions will we be spending? The president doesn't talk about that and that is not acceptable. Can we leave tomorrow? No. But we can and must begin the process of withdrawing American troops as soon as feasible and transferring responsibility to the Iraqi government and their military.

What is the role of the individual and individual leadership in American politics? And who are some of your historical role models?

In contemporary history, Paul Wellstone was the only senator in the Progressive Caucus, and he and Sheila were very good friends of mine. With Paul's death there is a real gap in the Senate that I would like to fill.

As a leader you do what you can do. For Vermont, I use my office to do what other members of Congress do, trying to bring money back home and to vote the right way. But, unlike many other members of Congress, we also use our office to educate and organize. When people say Vermont is a progressive state, they have to understand that it wasn't always that way. There are a number of factors involved in that, but one of them is that we have held hundreds of town meetings, both congressional and campaign, in smaller towns and larger cities throughout the state. In Vermont we held the first congressional

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37

Workers in Batumi, Georgia, fix a giant poster announcing the forthcoming visit of President George Bush.



STRINGER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

George in Georgia

The president's short, happy visit to the former Soviet state masked the long-term failures of U.S. policy.

BY FRIDA BERRIGAN

DURING HIS MAY VISIT TO GEORGIA, President George W. Bush shook his hips to traditional music, causing Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili to exclaim with delight, "I would never dance like that. He danced much better than I would have."

The remark was emblematic of the happy and historic visit. The small former Soviet state received a much-needed scrubbing before welcoming its first American presidential visitor. The president's motorcade rumbled over newly paved roads en route to Tbilisi and buildings throughout the capital were freshly painted.

From the podium in Freedom Square, where hundreds of thousands had gathered two years ago to protest and finally oust the regime of Eduard Shevardnadze, Bush told the crowd, "Your courage is inspiring democratic reformers and sending a message that echoes across the world: Freedom will be the future of every nation and every

people on Earth. ... Georgia is today both sovereign and free and a beacon of liberty for this region and the world."

Under the surface

The mainstream press coverage of the trip focused on Georgia's new opportunity to step out of the shadow of its Soviet past and into the sunshine of "New Europe" and a warm relationship with the West. But a more troubling dimension of U.S.-Georgian relations lurked under the surface. Bush praised the Georgian people's courage from behind a high wall of clear bulletproof screen, while sharpshooters patrolled the rooftops. The screen was nearly invisible to the cameras, but its presence, as well as the malfunctioning grenade thrown within 100 yards of Bush, highlighted the contradiction of the war on terrorism: The Bush administration's rhetorical embrace of freedom and democracy is undermined by Washington's policies of arming and training repressive regimes.

As exemplified in Georgia, and repeated in many corners of the world, U.S. arms transfers and military aid policies undermine efforts to counter terrorism effectively. Since 2002, U.S. funding to foreign militaries has increased and restrictions on military transfers have been waived at an unprecedented rate. Indeed, 20 of the top 25 U.S. arms clients in the developing world in 2003 were either undemocratic regimes or governments deemed by the U.S. State Department to have committed major human rights abuses.

Georgia is not the worst example of this dynamic. Across the Caspian Sea, Uzbekistan also receives millions more in military aid. An authoritarian regime with a human rights record that includes the gruesome 2002 killing of a dissident by boiling him alive, Uzbekistan is now reportedly accepting suspected terrorists from U.S. custody—prisoners who are subjected to interrogation techniques not allowed in this country.

The United States is party to both the

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which it ratified in 1992, and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment and Punishment, which it ratified in 1994. So is Uzbekistan, but its history of flouting international human rights standards is well known, even to the U.S. State Department. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), signing these treaties ensures that protection from torture is “non-derogable,” meaning that it applies at all times, even during war or public emergencies.

Dangerous bargains

From the Philippines to Colombia, from Nepal to Nigeria, anywhere leaders have embraced the aims of the U.S.-led war on terrorism, the United States has glossed over concerns about human rights, democratic reform and the rule of law. In the short term, this might lead to some progress in capturing individual terrorists or allowing the United States military flexibility, but a closer look at what the United States gives and what it gets in return in Georgia hints at the larger problem of the shortsighted, self-serving and dangerous bargains made in the name of fighting terrorism.

For a country that is slightly smaller than South Carolina, with only 4.6 million citizens, Georgia receives a staggering amount of military support from the United States. In 1997, Georgia received its first foreign military financing (FMF) grant of \$700,000. The next year, Washington granted \$5.3 million in military aid—a sevenfold increase. Since then, Georgia has received a total of \$107.7 million in FMF grants and the Bush administration requested an additional \$12 million for Tbilisi in the 2006 budget.

Georgia has also been buying weapons and military hardware from the United States—a total of \$21.9 million between 1999 and 2003. Georgia started slowly, taking delivery of \$19,000 in military equipment in 1999. But, that was just the beginning. Georgia took delivery of \$9.8 million of weaponry and hardware in 2003, the last year for which Pentagon data is available.

Additionally, Georgia has been a recipient of the State Department’s International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds since 1994. Before the war on terrorism, IMET funds hovered between \$300,000 to just over \$400,000 per year. But in 2002 the funding almost doubled to \$889,000. In 2003, the funding increased another 33 percent to \$1.2 million—similar amounts were granted in 2004 and 2005. President Bush

has requested another \$1.2 million in 2006, an almost 2,000 percent increase in IMET aid to Georgia over the past decade.

This is not classroom instruction. This is on-the-ground training with immediate applications. American soldiers are training a Georgian “rapid response” military force to protect the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline from terrorist attacks. Construction on the pipeline through Georgia is near completion and will connect the Mediterranean

Middle East. U.S. warplanes crisscross Georgian airspace, thousands of U.S. troops are stationed there, and Georgian bases store fuel and equipment for the United States.

The relationship extends all the way to Iraq. Georgia is one of a handful of countries wholeheartedly backing the U.S.-led war in Iraq. Following Bush’s re-election in November 2004, Georgia increased its number of troops in Iraq from 159 to 850. At a time when larger allies like Italy and

Anywhere leaders have embraced the war on terrorism, the United States has glossed over concerns about the rule of law.

with the Caspian oil fields, which hold the world’s third largest oil and gas reserves.

In another region, according to the *New York Times*, U.S. military training and support appear to have helped the Georgian military expel Chechen rebels and Islamic fighters from the Pankisi Gorge, a narrow strip of land near the Russian border. While the Bush administration linked these fighters to al Qaeda, Georgian Defense Minister David Tevzadze publicly challenged these claims, telling *Defense Week*, “it is very difficult to believe” that al Qaeda is in the Gorge, because they would need to “cross at least six or seven countries.”

In 2002, a *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter spoke with soldiers receiving U.S. training for the Pankisi Gorge exercises. Their captain, Shalvab Badzhelidze, was candid about the real objectives of the training. “Pankisi is a minuscule problem,” he said. “We are doing something much more serious. We are training for an operation in Abkhazia.” Georgia lost this tiny province to secessionist rebels in 1993, and its inhabitants live under Russian support and protection.

This pattern of lumping dissidents, criminals and anyone unsavory or troublesome under the rubric of al Qaeda is repeated by leaders in the Philippines, Indonesia, Algeria, Uzbekistan and elsewhere. And in response, U.S. military training aid has increased more than 50 percent since 2001.

Both sides gain in this dynamic. Georgian President Saakashvili successfully uses the rhetoric of the war on terrorism to isolate domestic threats and crack down on dissent, and uses U.S. weapons and military know-how to rebuff Russia and consolidate power. For its part, Washington has the advantage of Georgia’s strategic location near the volatile

Poland are planning to pull troops out of Iraq by the end of 2005, this increase makes Georgia one of the top military contributors on a per-capita basis.

Georgians pay the price

The improvements in Georgia’s human rights record were repeatedly touted during President Bush’s visit there. But, on the eve of his trip, HRW released a report asserting that steps taken by President Saakashvili have “proven inadequate” to “stem abusive practices.” Moreover, the report continues, “Some of the government’s new law enforcement policies appeared to trigger new allegations of due process violations, torture, and ill-treatment.” In earlier reports, HRW noted that the country is “one of the most corrupt in the world, is desperately short of money, and has a record of persistent and widespread human rights abuses.”

Bush’s own State Department cannot disagree. In its most recent Human Rights Report, the Department notes that “NGOs reported that police brutality continued, and in certain areas increased. Law enforcement officers continued to torture, beat and otherwise abuse detainees.”

The oil pipeline, military access to Georgian territory, support for the war on terrorism and the war in Iraq, the photogenic closeness to a former Soviet state—are these things too valuable to risk alienating Georgian leaders by pushing hard for real democratic reform and respect for human rights? It seems so. While Bush dances in Freedom Square, human rights abuses continue in Georgia. And the war on terrorism flounders because U.S. policies bolster rather than counter terror throughout the world. ■

injuries to ALL

A human rights report details the gruesome cost of the Bush administration's hostility to workplace safety.

BY JAMIE DANIEL

READERS OF THE MARCH 5 *New York Times* were greeted by the grotesque headline, "His Hands Reattached, a Worker is Overjoyed." The piece included a photo of the recovering machinist, 49-year-old Arsenio Matias, a Dominican immigrant and father of six. While operating a vacuum press that produces plastic components for window displays, both his hands had been caught up and neatly severed at the wrist. Only the quick thinking of his co-workers, who used their belts to stop the flow of blood from his arms and ran to buy ice to keep his hands alive until medics could arrive, allowed Matias to survive long enough to have his hands surgically reattached. Doctors do not expect him to regain normal mobility.

This account of traumatic injury at the workplace is a fairly ordinary situation—the only thing exceptional about it is that Matias' hands were saved. Had this not been the case, or if he had lost the use of his hands over time to repetitive stress, we would know nothing about him. Disabling workplace injuries are now so common in the United States that the thousands of workers who lose their fingers, hands, hearing, sight, mobility—and often their lives—every year remain invisible to most of us. We don't see the human cost of unsafe machines, dangerous production quotas, inadequate safety equipment and exposure to toxic chemicals unless a case like that of Matias catches a reporter's attention.

What's worse, these conditions are unnecessary. This is one of the conclusions of an important study released by Human Rights Watch. "Blood, Sweat, and Fear: Workers' Rights in U.S. Meat and Poultry Plants" documents the outrageous incidence of needless disability and death suffered mostly by immigrant workers in this



PHOTO: PIERCE COLLEGE AGRICULTURAL DEPT.

industry, as well as the extent to which industry and Bush administration antipathy to the right to organize has eroded enforcement of basic health and safety standards that unions fought to establish throughout the 20th century. The report is available at www.hrw.org/reports/2005/usao105/.

"Blood, Sweat, and Fear" documents in excruciating detail the rates of traumatic and longer term injury. Workers in the industry now face a one in five chance of severe disability or death on the job—jobs that often lack benefits and decent pay. Just as crucially, the report traces the industry's concerted and largely successful efforts over the last two decades to disable the once-muscular unions that had previously protected meatpacking and poultry workers from such ferocious injury rates.

Indeed, while "injury rates had been in line with other manufacturing sectors with trade union representation ... since the breakdown of national bargaining agreements, [meat packing] has become the most dangerous factory job in America." Referring to industry giant Tyson Foods as the "Wal-Mart" of the industry, the report traces a de-skilling of meat and poultry production that has "reduced every stage in the process to repetitive cutting," forcing workers to repeat the same motion 30,000 times a day, often with no time to sharpen dull knives or clear dangerous detritus from the work area.

As is the case in other industries, meatpacking and poultry workers have suffered the impact of the Bush administration's collusion with industry giants like Tyson,

a fact that has permitted "government agencies themselves [to] give production priority over worker safety."

One of the first actions taken by the Bush administration was the repeal of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Ergonomics Standard adopted by the Clinton administration. This was just the first step in what became a pattern for the administration, which has actively turned its back on worker health and safety in order to placate its corporate allies. For example, as the AFL-CIO pointed out last February, the White House has proposed freezing the budget for OSHA standard enforcement programs, even though OSHA is already so inadequately funded that its staff will only be able to inspect any particular plant an average of once a century.

For FY 2006, the Bush budget proposes to eliminate all funding for union-run worker health and safety training programs. In addition, the Bush administration has shut down the development of new workplace rules on exposure to cancer-causing substances, reactive chemicals and infectious diseases

such as tuberculosis. It has refused to issue a rule requiring employers to pay for the sort of personal protective equipment that could prevent thousands of injuries to the mostly immigrant, mostly low-wage workforce in industries like meat processing.

In another obvious favor to corporations, the administration repealed the OSHA rule requiring musculoskeletal disorders to be reported on workplace injury rate logs, and made enforcement of existing ergonomic standards "voluntary" rather than mandatory.

The degree of administration contempt for worker safety was perhaps most evident when, in January 2002, President Bush appointed as acting solicitor of labor one Eugene Scalia, the son of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia and a member of the arch-conservative Federalist Society. The solicitor of labor is the federal attorney responsible for implementing and enforcing workplace safety, wage and hour, pension security, and other critically important protections. But Scalia was apparently nominated by Bush precisely because of what AFL-CIO President John Sweeney

has termed his "extreme and relentless opposition to ergonomics protections and other worker protection initiatives."

Scalia's opposition was evident in a paper published by the Cato Institute in June of 2000, in which he belittled carpal tunnel syndrome and other RSI injuries as "subjective" and dismissed ergonomics as a "questionable science." Only after a concerted effort by labor unions and Senate Democrats was Scalia forced from the Department of Labor in 2003. His resignation was lamented by, among others, the National Right to Work Foundation and Bush's secretary of labor, Elaine Chao.

Given that we're all going to suffer another four years of this administration's relentless anti-worker agenda, we would do well to recognize that the injuries faced by those who process our hamburgers and chicken are ever closer to becoming "injuries to all." ■

JAMIE DANIEL is the director of organizing and development at UPI Local 4100, IFT/AFT and a co-chair of the Chicago Center for Working Class Studies.

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Three-Dimensional Economics

CAFTA won't help U.S. workers, and blocking it may help the rest of the world.

BY DAVID MOBERG

IF YOU BELIEVE THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION, its free trade agreement with five Central American countries and the Dominican Republic will open “BIG” (its emphasis) markets to American products, forge an alliance to save domestic textile jobs, “protect labor and environment,” and, of course, “strengthen freedom and democracy.”

Judging from their protests, many workers and peasants in those countries disagree. And judging from Bush's reluctance over the past year to bring the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) to a vote, a majority of even *this* Republican Congress don't believe him. But the push for a vote is now on: The region's leaders are visiting the United States and trade officials are striking special interest deals for support—such as the \$500,000 federal grant that tilted The Humane Society to support CAFTA after years of criticizing similar trade pacts.

There are good reasons to doubt the administration claims. Even if they're wide open to American exports, the signatories are small, poor countries—including Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras. The largest, the Dominican Republic, is a market about the size of Bakersfield, California. Even optimistically exaggerated trade with them isn't going to make a dent in the record U.S. trade deficit, which reached \$617 billion, or 5.3 percent of the U.S. economy, last year.

CAFTA isn't likely to expand markets by reducing Central American poverty much either. Flooding their markets with subsidized U.S. corn will hurt many of the rural poor. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the model for CAFTA, offers scant inspiration. Over NAFTA's first eight years, Mexico lost 1.3 million jobs and suffered declining real wages, according to the Carnegie Endowment for Internal Peace, and the United States lost 880,000 jobs, according to the Economic Policy Institute.

No boon to workers

Hemispheric cooperation is not likely to save either Central American garment

workers or the remaining U.S. apparel and textile workforce. The global quotas on export of apparel and textile products to Europe and the United States established under the longstanding Multifiber Agreement had dispersed the industry to dozens of poor countries. But when it ended on December 31, Chinese garment exports to the United States shot up in January by 75 percent, with 20 times more cotton knit shirts coming in than a year earlier. Apparel factories in both Central America and the United States have been shutting down. Not even China's upwards reevaluation of its currency, which is needed to reflect economic reality and to redress a rapidly growing trade imbalance with the United States, is likely to stop the Chinese from capturing a projected 70 percent of the U.S. market in a few years, much of it at the expense of small, poor, garment-exporting countries.

On labor rights, CAFTA is no improvement over NAFTA's deeply flawed labor side agreement, and it retreats from the labor rights standard that unions praised in the free trade agreement with Jordan signed in 2000. It simply requires the countries to enforce their own laws and “strive” to protect labor rights, with no meaningful penalties if they fail. Under current preferential trade agreements, unions and human rights groups have been able to petition the U.S. government for trade sanctions—and win some improvements—when Central American governments have violated international labor standards.

Central American laws and enforcement of the rights of workers to organize and strike fall far short of international standards, according to studies by the State Department, the International Labor Organization, Human Rights Watch and labor organizations, including the AFL-CIO. And the International Labor Rights Fund, whose study of Central America the Bush administration refused to release officially, reports that even during CAFTA negotiations several governments “were taking steps to downgrade their labor laws.”

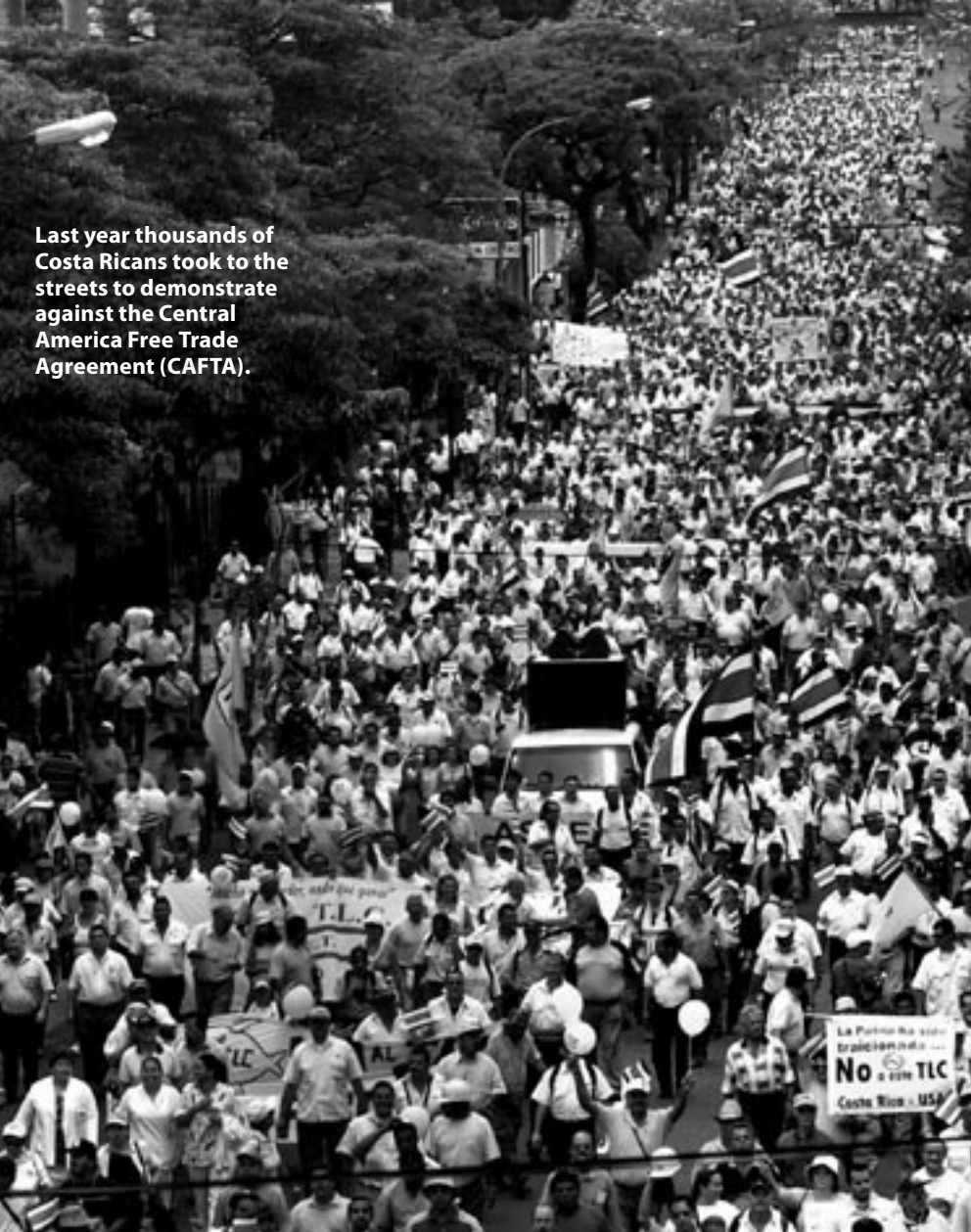
The weak protections for labor rights are not the only way in which CAFTA is a blow against democracy. More than a deal to lower tariffs, CAFTA is an agreement to protect corporate rights (including intellectual property) and to restrict government controls over investment, public procurement and provision of public services that breaks new ground, according to Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch. “The procurement rules are horrific, even broader than NAFTA, way broader than WTO,” she says. In many ways, CAFTA grants investors and corporations far more rights than NAFTA or the proposed inclusion of public services under World Trade Organization rules. It even incorporates some of the very broad and controversial language of the failed Multilateral Agreement on Investment.

CAFTA, following the NAFTA precedent, allows foreign investors to sue governments under international trade tribunals to protect against loss of property, not only from nationalization but even from regulatory measures that might constrain corporations and are thus deemed “indirectly ... equivalent to expropriation.” Despite a congressional requirement in the 2002 “fast track” legislation to restrict such investor protection, CAFTA opens the door to expanded action by foreign corporations in the United States and other CAFTA countries to fight “regulatory takings,” or losses of potential profits because of public interest legislation. For example, if CAFTA had been in place, Harken Energy—an oil company in which Bush was once an investor and director—could have more easily pursued its claims for \$12 million in damages against Costa Rica for a government moratorium on oil drilling. Those claims are now filed in that country's courts.

CAFTA's larger context

CAFTA is more important politically than economically. It's a stalking horse for the broader Free Trade Agreement of the Americas and a step toward stronger

Last year thousands of Costa Ricans took to the streets to demonstrate against the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).



MAYELA LOPEZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

protection of corporate interests in future trade agreements. It faces unusually unified Democratic opposition, much of it focused on labor rights, and right-wing Republican hostility, focused more generally on globalism. But some Republicans also have regional concerns about increased imports of textiles and sugar, since CAFTA threatens a price support system that relies on supply control, not on taxpayer subsidies.

The debate over CAFTA highlights some of the weaknesses in the cheerleader view of globalization, exemplified in *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman's latest effusive book, *The World Is Flat*. The world has been flattened, he argues, by a combination of software and communications technology, the opening of China, India and other markets, and changing corporate strategies, such as outsourcing and offshoring. Everybody com-

petes and collaborates on this giant, open, level playing field now, offering great opportunities to rich and poor countries alike.

While this "flattening"—or opening—of a more global market in labor, goods and services is undoubtedly underway, Friedman ignores the vertical dimension of the new world economy. First, there's the issue of power. Deals like CAFTA underscore how much the rules of the world economy are shaped by the United States, acting on behalf of the interests of multinational capital (and secondarily in the interests of U.S. corporations). In his previous book, Friedman said that governments had no choice but to accept the "golden straightjacket" of the Washington Consensus policies of austerity and privatization. When Bush advocates the spread of freedom and democracy, he is not calling for power to the people. He

wants governments that will accept these external policy constraints and deal with the consequences, through the appearance of democracy and elections, but will not deviate from or challenge the corporate global agenda. The "flat world" has room for only a very flattened notion of democracy.

There is also the issue of inequality. The number and proportion of extreme poor, living on \$1 a day or less, has declined worldwide over the past two decades, as the numbers of moderately poor have increased, but the progress has been uneven, with many countries regressing, especially in Africa. While there's a heated debate among academics about how to measure global inequality overall and whether it has risen or fallen in recent decades, even the most optimistic pictures show rising global inequality if the dramatic changes in China are excluded. Indisputably, inequality within most countries, whether rich or developing, including China, is increasing.

Submission to free markets and the dictates of the Washington Consensus do not guarantee economic success, and as economist Jeffrey Sachs argues in *The End of Poverty*, the market is no magic answer to global poverty. Indeed, several studies, including a recent analysis from the International Labor Organization, have found that protection of labor rights, democracy and greater equality are associated with higher economic growth, stronger export performance and other signs of economic success.

China, on the other hand, proves an exception to the arguments of both neoliberals and social democrats. China has succeeded partly because it hasn't submitted to the flat world: Its currency controls, which now pose severe problems for the United States, helped to stabilize China during the 1997 Asian financial crisis and helped it grow (often at the expense of jobs in both rich and poor countries). But CAFTA would prohibit such controls, which permit governments to slow down sudden flights of capital, and many of the other means by which China harnessed foreign investment for domestic growth.

If opponents succeed in blocking CAFTA, the victory will be important mainly as a signal that the onwards march of corporate-friendly economic agreements has at least temporarily halted. It will open political space to the demand that governments go back to the drawing board and devise new relationships and institutions that respond to the realities of both the "flat" world of global integration and the "vertical" world of power and inequality. ■

Crash Landing

United Airlines' ditching of its pensions may well precipitate a national crisis.

BY JACK RASMUS

ON MAY 10, A FEDERAL COURT announced United Airlines could pocket \$3.2 billion of the contributions owed to its 134,000 workers' pension plans, and turn over its four pensions to the government's Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC).

The move will leave the PBGC saddled with \$9.8 billion in total pension liabilities from United, making it the largest bailout of a private pension fund in more than three decades, at a time when the PBGC faces tens of billions in mounting red ink and possible bankruptcy itself.

The court's action is also likely to set in motion a snowball effect as other major airlines move to jettison their pension plans. The effects could spill over to other industries—including the auto industry, where there are similar rumblings—as corporate America accelerates its dismantling

of union-negotiated Defined Benefit Pension plans, which promise participants a specific monthly benefit at retirement, and seeks to replace them with privatized 401K-like contribution plans.

United's abandonment comes barely a year after Congress passed legislation in April 2004 that gave the airline a two-year, \$1.6 billion reprieve in deferred pension fund payments. United CEO Glenn Tilton happily declared at the time, "This legislation will help strengthen the pension plans of millions of American workers, including the 62,000 employees of United Airlines."

But now, those employees have been left holding the bag. The takeover of their pensions' obligations by the PBGC will mean significant reductions in their pension benefit payments at retirement. A January 30 *Wall Street Journal* article estimated that, "For a 45-year-old whose plan fails this year, for example, the government covers a maximum of \$11,403 a year, even if he has earned a larger pension."



A gathering storm

But United's nearly \$10 billion abandonment is only a drop in the bucket of endangered pension plans. Between 1985 and 2002, U.S. corporations have abandoned more than 80,000 Defined Benefit Pension plans, according to 2003 Senate hearings that examined both the shoddy condition of corporate pension funds and the PBGC's ability to handle future terminations.

Since 2000, more than 9,000 such plans have been terminated, with more than twice terminated in 2004 than the previous year. During the '90s, the PBGC assumed, on average, pension payment liabilities for an additional 50,000 workers each year. That annual liability for pension benefit payments has increased since 2000 to an average of an additional 175,000 workers a year. The recent action by United Airlines promises to set off yet another wave among companies in a similar position, such as Delta, Continental and Greyhound, triggering an even more severe pension crisis.

The growing number of corporations dumping traditional pension plans upon the back of the PBGC has placed severe stress on its ability to guarantee even reduced pension benefits to workers. In 2004, the PBGC experienced the largest financial loss in its history, \$23 billion. This followed an \$11 billion loss in 2003, with multibillion dollar losses each year since 2000.

Thus, the PBGC now faces its own funding crisis. It has an immediate liability of \$62 billion in pension benefit payments and assets of only \$39 billion. Should other airlines and other industries follow United's course, that crisis will grow much worse—likely requiring a major bailout by Congress of the Defined Benefit Pension plans that the PBGC is responsible for.

Referring to this \$23 billion deficit, Rep. Jan Schakowsky told reporters on May 10, "Taxpayers had better buckle up because

we will be in for a bumpy ride of bailout after bailout, as more and more corporations dump their pension plan obligations on the PBGC." She and Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.) have co-sponsored the Pension Fairness and Full Disclosure Act, which would deny payments to executives' plans if worker pension plan obligations were underfunded.

But the current deficit is only part of the problem. In an emergency report issued in June 2004, the PBGC estimated that more than 1,000 pension plans were underfunded by \$50 million or more—a combined underfunded liability of \$278.6 billion. And that doesn't include the thousands of other companies with underfunded liabilities of less than \$50 million.

The aggregate total underfunding of corporate pension plans for which the PBGC is liable as of 2004 amounts to more than \$600 billion. About \$100 billion of that underfunding represents corporations and plans with severe financial problems and thus a high likelihood of pension plan default and termination in the near term.

In the words of the PBGC's executive director, Bradley Belt, "The current massive underfunding of defined benefit pensions, compounded by the financial struggles of major industries that rely heavily on these pensions, has greatly increased the risk of loss for the pension insurance program."

Bush's red herring

While President Bush stresses a financial crisis in Social Security in order to push his plans to privatize that public retirement system, a very real crisis in the traditional Defined Benefit Pension plan system is coming closer by the day.

The April 2004 legislation passed by Congress amounted to a two-year, \$80 billion "pension contributions holiday" for corporations with underfunded pension liabilities, but it was basically a stop-

gap measure. In January, Bush proposed legislation to the House and Senate that would allow companies with severely underfunded pension plans to take up to 10 years to make up contributions to stabilize their funds, instead of the two years that had previously been required. A single corporate bond interest rate to calculate the value of a pension's fund was proposed, but it is a highly complicated formula that would provide many opportunities for corporations to manipulate and thus avoid accurately estimating their fund's true value. Finally, a sharp increase in corporate contributions to the PBGC, from the previous \$19 per worker to \$30 per worker, was proposed. For corporations with "below investment grade" pension funds the PBGC contribution would be even higher than \$30.

This last proposal seems designed to encourage corporations in trouble to abandon their Defined Benefit Pension plans even faster than before. Should Congress pass Bush's proposals this year, companies with ratings below investment grade, like U.S. Steel, Lucent, Goodyear, Qwest and R.J. Reynolds—not to mention most of the remaining major airlines—will now seriously consider dumping their pensions onto the already financially stressed PBGC.

Perhaps that is just what the Bush administration wants. It would certainly hasten the demise of the traditional Defined Benefit Pension system and usher the way for Bush's preferred "ownership society," replacing group pensions with 401k-like individual pension accounts.

Congress began considering legislation based on the Bush proposal in March. In the upcoming months, decisions will be made on further restructuring of the private pension system, the import of which is no less consequential than the parallel debate regarding the restructuring of Social Security.

Today, 44 million people receive Social Security Retirement benefits. But there are 45 million workers who are dependent on Defined Benefit Pensions with a potential total liability of \$1.5 trillion. While the fight continues over Social Security privatization and restructuring in a highly visible public manner, the equally significant conflict over what will happen to these pensions has occurred far below the public's radar.

JACK RASMUS is the author of *The War at Home: The Corporate Offensive from Reagan to Bush*, which can be ordered online at www.kyklos-productions.com.

COLLAPSE OF DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION PLANS, 1975-2002

PERIOD	PLAN TERMINATION	PLANS REMAINING
1975-1985	65,000	112,000
1986-2002	95,000	32,000

Source: Hearings, Special Committee on Aging, U.S. Senate, October 14, 2003

Tainted to the Core

Why conflicts of interest are hazardous to your health.

BY JENNIFER WASHBURN



IN THE FALL OF 2001, THE EDITORS of 12 prominent medical journals collectively announced that they would refuse to publish research on new prescription drugs unless the authors provided assurances that they had had unimpeded access to the data and were fully responsible for the paper's conclusions. The announcement was an extraordinary admission of just how extensive industry control over medical research had become. The editors noted that more and more, the authors of scientific papers—even authors based at prestigious universities—did not have access to the complete trial data. In some cases, the editors observed, authors were unable to publish without prior authorization from the corporate sponsor.

The journal editors pointed out that publication of clinical studies in respected peer-reviewed journals is the “ultimate basis for most treatment decisions,” so it is essential that the data be gathered and presented in “an objective and dispassionate manner.” Medicine is only as good as the science on which it is based, and if that science is not objective and honest, then patients can be seriously harmed. The editors noted “that the current intellectual environment ... may threaten this precious objectivity.” Until recently, university medical centers contributed to the “quality, intellectual rigor and impact of such clinical trials,” they explained, “but as economic pressures mount, this may be a thing of the past.”

With the possible exception of business schools, industry's penetration into the nation's medical schools has been more sweeping than in any other sector of the university. Pharmaceutical companies sponsor daily lunches for medical students, during which they market their latest drugs; they ply professors with fancy dinners, gifts, luxurious trips and free prescriptions designed to influence their medical decisions and prescribing habits. These academic “opinion leaders” consult for, or hold equity in, the same firms that manufacture the drugs they are studying, while also often accepting generous fees to join their corporate advisory boards and speakers' bureaus. Sometimes they even hold the patent to the drug or device being tested. In a study of 800 scientific papers published in leading journals of medicine and molecular biology, Sheldon Krimsky, a professor of public policy at Tufts University, found that slightly more than a third of the lead authors based at research institutions in Massachusetts had a significant financial interest in their own reports. These included owning related patents, or holding an executive, ad-

visory or major equity position in a company with a stake in the research.

So pervasive are such ties that journal editors now frequently complain they can no longer find academic experts who do not have a financial interest in a drug or therapy they would like to review. This may be good news for corporations, but it is anything but good news for ordinary citizens. Indeed, the growing nexus between universities and the pharmaceutical industry could not come at a worse time. The cost of pharmaceutical drugs—and health care in general—in America continues to skyrocket. Expensive new drugs are aggressively marketed on TV and in doctors' offices the moment they hit the

university-based medicine is losing its hallowed objectivity. After conducting an extensive review of the medical literature for an article in the *NEJM*, Thomas Bodenheimer, an internist at University of California, San Francisco, found that academic investigators were rapidly ceding to industry the control over nearly every stage of the clinical research process.

In the past, for example, it was common for university scientists to initiate the research protocol. Now, however, studies are frequently conceived and designed in the company's own pharmacological and marketing departments, thus removing this formative stage of the research from academic hands almost entirely. The company

Journal editors now frequently complain they can no longer find academic experts who do not have a financial interest in a drug or therapy they would like to review.

market. Yet physicians warn that many of these hyped prescriptions are simply “me-too drugs” that vary only slightly from medications already on the market, despite being far more expensive. Research suggests that publicly funded science, most of it performed at universities, was a “critical contributor” to the discovery of nearly all of the 25 most important breakthrough drugs introduced between 1970 and 1995. If university scientists lose their independence, who will perform this pathbreaking research and objectively evaluate the safety and effectiveness of drugs already on the market?

Independence in jeopardy

Unfortunately, it is this scholarly independence that is now in jeopardy. “The boundaries between the academic medical colleges and the drug companies are becoming ever more porous,” says Marcia Angell, a senior lecturer at Harvard's School of Public Health and former editor in chief of the *New England Journal of Medicine* (*NEJM*). “It used to be that academic medical colleges said, ‘OK, we will take this industry grant and do the study, but our researchers are going to retain the data; they are going to analyze the data.’ Now this arm's-length relationship has broken down.”

Indeed, there are strong indications that

then shops the study around to various academic institutions (and a growing number of competing for-profit entities as well), in search of investigators to conduct the research. Should a professor choose to reject the study or insist on changes not agreeable to the sponsor, another university scientist will very likely be more solicitous.

In this way, industry is slowly changing the direction of academic research, causing it to be far more market-driven and less directed toward truly important science. Not surprisingly, wrote Bodenheimer, exercising control over trial design makes it far easier for companies to build biases into their research—some easier and some harder to detect. One analysis by Paula Rochon, published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, found that in 54 percent of corporate-sponsored arthritis drug trials, the dose of the funding company's drug was higher than that of the comparison drug, so that the results were clearly skewed in the sponsor's favor.

Another disturbing trend in university medicine today is the growing use of ghostwriters and “guest writers.” Readers may see a prominent academic's name at the top of a research article or review, but that scholar may or may not be the person who actually wrote the paper. Frequently, a big-name professor or department chair is invited to appear as a “guest author,” even though she

or he had no involvement in the research. Or in the case of company-initiated studies and reviews, the manuscript may have been ghostwritten by a medical communications company working for the drug maker, and its author may have been paid an honorarium to attach his or her name to it. The average reader thus thinks the study bears the stamp of approval of an independent academic scholar, when in fact this is nothing more than an illusion. *The Lancet* commented on this alarming phenomenon in an editorial, noting with some bitterness that “the pinnacle of success, presumably, is to sign up a prominent academic” to lend an aura of objectivity and prestige to the company’s research.

The practice of ghostwriting has become extremely prevalent, raising troubling questions about the trustworthiness of the science appearing in even the most prestigious medical journals. As Richard Horton, editor of *The Lancet*, caustically observed in 2004, “Journals have devolved into information-laundering operations for the pharmaceutical industry.”

Buried data

Regulating access to the raw data from a large, multisite trial is yet another tactic the drug industry commonly deploys to skew medical research in its favor. Sometimes the principal investigators are given unimpeded access, but increasingly companies prefer to control the data themselves. Frequently, explained Bodenheimer, studies are designed with multiple end points (or measurable outcomes), so that it is relatively easy for the company to “publish those end points favorable to their product and bury data on less favorable end points.”

Recently, M. Michael Wolfe, a gastroenterologist at Boston University, publicly disclosed that Pharmacia Corporation, the manufacturer of the blockbuster arthritis drug Celebrex, had duped him in precisely this manner. In the summer of 2000, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) asked Wolfe to write a review of a Celebrex study showing that the drug was associated with lower rates of stomach and intestinal ulcers and other complications than two older arthritis medications (diclofenac and ibuprofen). Wolfe found the study, tracking eight thousand patients over a six-month period, persuasive and penned a favorable review, which helped to drive up Celebrex sales. But early the next year, when he had occasion to review the same study again—this time while serving on the Food and Drug Administration’s

arthritis advisory committee—Wolfe was flabbergasted by what he saw. Pharmacia’s study had run for one year, not six months, as both Wolfe and *JAMA* had been led to believe. When the complete data set was considered, most of Celebrex’s advantages disappeared because the ulcer complications that occurred during the second half of the study were disproportionately found in patients taking Celebrex. “I am furious ... I wrote the editorial,” Wolfe told the *Washington Post*. “I looked like a fool. But ... all I had available to me was the data presented



in the article.” None of the original study’s sixteen authors, including eight university professors, had spoken out publicly about the suppression of data. All the authors were either employees of Pharmacia or paid consultants of the company.

The sordid story of SSRIs

Industry also manipulates academic research by suppressing negative studies altogether. Consider the recent medical scandal surrounding the class of antidepressants known as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), which have been linked to an increased risk of suicidal thinking and behavior in young people. Throughout the latter half of the ‘90s, the number of young Americans being given Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft and other antidepressants skyrocketed. By 2002, roughly 11 million prescriptions had been handed out. Boys under the age of 12 diagnosed with “conduct disorders” were the fastest-growing group. The bulk of the published academic literature strongly supported treating depressed children and adolescents with SSRIs. As it turns out, however, this recommendation was at odds with what the com-

plete research record showed. In early 2004, an FDA scientist reviewed all 15 pediatric SSRI studies in the agency’s files, including many that had never been published. In all but three of those studies, young patients suffering from depression experienced no greater improvement taking an SSRI than they did with a placebo, or sugar pill. Given that scientists were very likely involved in a large portion of this research and duty-bound to publish, how did so much of this negative evidence drop from public view?

In June 2004, this question made its way into the headlines when New York attorney general Eliot Spitzer filed suit against GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), the manufacturer of Paxil, charging that the company had “engaged in repeated and persistent fraud by misrepresenting, concealing and otherwise failing to disclose” information showing that its drug was not only ineffective in treating child and adolescent depression but also linked to an increased risk of suicidal thoughts and self-injurious behavior. GSK had funded five studies on Paxil and childhood depression, only one of which ever got published. Taken together, however, the data clearly showed that those children who took Paxil were approximately two times more at risk of becoming suicidal than those taking a placebo. Parents of children who had committed suicide, along with a small minority of psychiatrists, had been suggesting for some time that there appeared to be a link between SSRIs and suicide, but until these revelations, their concerns had been largely discredited.

Unfortunately, GSK wasn’t the only company burying research in this way. When Andrew Mosholder, a senior FDA epidemiologist, examined 22 pediatric studies, he found that children taking a wide range of antidepressants were also nearly twice as likely as those given a placebo to show signs of becoming suicidal—a finding that his FDA supervisors initially sought to suppress but was later corroborated by an independent research team at Columbia University. What was perplexing was that nearly all of the published literature, authored by many of the leading lights of academic psychiatry, had arrived at the opposite conclusion: SSRIs were safe and effective in treating depression in youngsters.

Was this really what their academic studies showed?

When the FDA and other independent scientists took a closer look, they found a striking discrepancy between what these esteemed academic psychiatrists had writ-

ten in their papers—and what the data actually revealed. In a surprising number of cases, the benefits of these drugs were overstated, and the problems were downplayed or buried. The only GSK study of Paxil that ever got published, for example, concluded that the data “provides evidence of the safety and efficacy of [Paxil] in the treatment of adolescent depression.” (On the basis of this one study, GSK launched a

working under a \$25 million research grant from Wyeth-Ayerst.

It is impossible to prove a direct causal relationship between Keller’s funding sources and the distortions found in his research. But at least three other studies authored by prominent academic psychiatrists on the pediatric use of SSRIs evidenced similar distortions—and all the authors had financial ties to the manu-

of numerous drug companies, including Bristol-Myers, Eli Lilly and Wyeth-Ayerst.

In December 2003, when the faulty nature of this research finally came to light, it prompted a quick response from the British Drug Authority, which recommended that doctors not prescribe SSRI antidepressant drugs to children under 18, citing a two- to threefold increase in the risk of suicidal behavior and insufficient evidence of benefit. Nearly one year later, in October 2004, the FDA announced that all such antidepressants must carry a “black box” warning label linking the drugs to an increased risk of suicidal thoughts and behavior in children and teenagers.

Where’s the media?

Sadly these government warnings and restrictions have done little to address the underlying problem: The growing influence of pharmaceutical companies on academic medicine and research. When the American media tried to sort out the implications of the FDA’s new warning label on the SSRI drugs, the first experts they turned to were often the same academics who had been implicated in overlooking the SSRI drugs’ problems. In one story, the *Chicago Tribune* asserted that “a number of mental health experts cautioned that the strict warning label could discourage the use of antidepressants by adolescents who need them.” It went on to quote Graham Emslie, one of the doctors who had overstated the drugs’ benefits relative to his research data. None of Emslie’s financial ties to the drugs’ manufacturers were ever mentioned in the story. Emslie was simply identified as “the chief of child and adolescent psychiatry at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.” Could anything sound more credible than that?

Thus far, neither the federal government nor the universities themselves have been willing to adopt strict conflict-of-interest guidelines. Unless the media and medical journals vigorously investigate these commercial ties—and bring them to the public’s attention—the drug industry will continue to exploit the aura of objectivity and independence that our universities command, eroding the academic mission and causing great harm to the medical enterprise and public health. ■

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When the FDA and other independent scientists took a closer look, they found a striking discrepancy between what these esteemed academic psychiatrists had written in their papers—and what the data actually revealed.

massive promotional campaign telling its sales representatives going out to doctors’ offices that Paxil had “REMARKABLE Efficacy and Safety in the treatment of adolescent depression.”) But when an FDA examiner studied the data more closely, he found the authors’ claims highly exaggerated, as the drug actually failed on the protocol’s two primary measured outcomes. The study also concluded that “most adverse events were not serious,” when, in fact, seven of the children who took Paxil had to be hospitalized after suffering severe adverse effects from the drug.

Eighteen of the Paxil study’s 22 authors were university scholars. Its lead author, Martin B. Keller, is a highly acclaimed psychiatrist and chair of the psychiatry department at Brown University who has extensive ties to the drug industry. In 1998, when the Rhode Island attorney-general’s office forced Keller to forfeit hundreds of thousands of dollars in state grant money to settle a financial fraud inquiry, it came to light that Keller had received more than half a million dollars from drug companies that year, most of it from the same firms whose drugs he had touted in journals and at medical conferences. According to the *Boston Globe*, Keller’s financial ties were so numerous that they prompted the National Institute of Mental Health to review its conflict-of-interest rules. The most recent publicly available data shows that as of June 2003, Keller had been consulting for at least 17 major drug firms, including Merck, Bristol-Myers, Eli Lilly and Pfizer, while also

facturers. One of these was a 2003 study published in *JAMA* led by Karen Wagner, a renowned psychiatrist and director of the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the University of Texas Medical Branch. The study claimed that the antidepressant Zoloft was “effective and well tolerated for children and adolescents.” But when the FDA and other outside experts examined the data from the two pooled studies more closely, they again found that the drug had failed to demonstrate positive outcomes. In fact, according to one analysis, when data left out of the published study were included, Zoloft had “an unfavorable risk-benefit balance.” In other words, the risks associated with taking the drug were greater than the anticipated benefits. At the time of this study, Wagner reported receiving research money from numerous pharmaceutical companies, consulting for 10 drug firms, and participating in speakers’ bureaus for Abbott Laboratories, Eli Lilly, Glaxo-SmithKline, Forest Laboratories, Pfizer and Novartis. The study itself had been funded by Pfizer, the maker of Zoloft, and the “study supervisor” held stock options in the company. Finally, the FDA criticized two Prozac studies (1997, 2002) for overstating the drug’s efficacy in treating childhood depression. Both studies had been led by Graham Emslie, a professor at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, and financed by Eli Lilly, the maker of Prozac. Emslie receives research support from industry; he also consults and serves on speakers’ bureaus



BY SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK

Revenge of Global Finance

When the final installment of the Star Wars series, *Revenge of the Sith*, brings us the pivotal moment of the entire saga—the change of the “good” Anakin Skywalker into the “bad” Darth Vader—it aims to draw parallels between

our personal and political decisions.

In a 2002 *Time* magazine interview, George Lucas explained the personal level through a type of pop-Buddhism: “He turns into Darth Vader because he gets attached to things. He can’t let go of his mother; he can’t let go of his girlfriend. He can’t let go of things. It makes you greedy. And when you’re greedy, you are on the path to the dark side, because you fear you’re going to lose things.”

But more resonant than how Anakin turned into Darth Vader is the parallel political question: How did the Republic turn into the Empire, or, more precisely, how does a democracy become a dictatorship? Lucas explained that it isn’t that the Empire conquered the Republic, but that the Republic *became* the Empire.

“One day, Princess Leia and her friends woke up and said, ‘This isn’t the Republic anymore, it’s the Empire. We are the bad guys.’” The contemporary connotations of this reference to Ancient Rome suggest the Star Wars transformation from Republic to Empire should be read against the background of Hardt and Negri’s *Empire* (from Nation State to the Global Empire).

The political connotations of the Star Wars universe are multiple and inconsistent. Therein resides the “mythic” power of that universe—a universe that includes a Reaganesque vision of the Free World versus the Evil Empire; the retreat of the Nation States, which can be given a rightist, nationalist Buchanan-Le Pen twist; the contradiction of persons of a noble status (Princesses, Jedi knights, etc.) defending the “democratic” republic; and

finally, its key insight that “we are the bad guys,” that the Empire emerges through the very way we, the “good guys,” fight the enemy out there. (In today’s “war on terror,” the real danger is what this war is turning us into.)

Such inconsistencies are what make the Star Wars series a political myth proper, which is not so much a narrative with a determinate political meaning, but rather an empty container of multiple, inconsistent and even mutually exclusive meanings. The question “But what does this political myth really mean?” is the wrong question, because its “meaning” is precisely to serve as this vessel of multiple meanings.

Star Wars I: The Phantom Menace gave us a crucial hint as to where to orient ourselves in this melee, specifically, the “Christological” features of the young Anakin (his immaculate conception, his victorious “pod-car” race, with its echoes of the famous chariot race in *Ben-Hur*, this “tale of Christ”). Since Star Wars’ ideological framework is the New Age pagan universe, it is quite appropriate that its central figure of Evil should echo Christ. Within the pagan horizon, the Event of Christ is the ultimate scandal. The figure of the Devil is specific to the Judeo-Christian tradition. But more than that, Christ himself is the ultimate diabolic figure, insofar as *diabolos* (to separate, to tear apart the One into Two) is the opposite of *symbolos* (to gather and unify). He brought the “sword, not peace,” in order to disturb the existing harmonious unity. Or, as Christ told Luke: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and his mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.” In order for there to be a properly unified “symbolic”

community of believers, Christ had to first come and perform the Holy Spirit’s separating “diabolic” founding gesture.

Thus the Christian stance is radically different from the teachings of paganism.

In clear contrast to the pagan wisdom that the universe is the abyss of the primordial Ground in which all “false” opposites—Good and Evil, appearance and reality, folly and wisdom, etc.—coincide, Christianity proclaims as the highest action precisely what paganism condemns as the source of all evil—the gesture of separation, of drawing the line, of clinging to an element that disturbs the balance of All.

What this means is that the Buddhist all-encompassing Compassion has to be opposed to the Christian intolerant, violent Love. The Buddhist stance is ultimately that of *indifference*, of quenching all passions that strive to establish differences, while the Christian love is a violent passion to introduce a *difference*, a gap in the order of being, to privilege and elevate some object above others. Love is violence not (only) in the vulgar sense of the Balkan proverb, “If he doesn’t beat me, he doesn’t love me!” The choice of love itself is already violent, as it tears an object out of its context and elevates it to the Thing. In Montenegrin folklore, the origin of Evil is a beautiful woman: She makes men lose their balance, she literally destabilizes the universe, coloring all things with a tone of partiality.

In March, the Vatican strongly condemned Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* as a book that spreads false teachings (that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and that they had descendants, that the true identity of the Grail is Mary’s vagina). The

Vatican especially rued that the book is so popular among the younger generation searching for spiritual guidance. The form of the Vatican’s intervention, which barely concealed a longing for the good old days when it could simply burn books, was obviously absurd. (Indeed, one almost suspects a conspiracy between the Vatican and the book’s publisher to give a fresh boost to its sales.) Nevertheless, the content of the Vatican’s message was basically correct. *The Da Vinci Code* effectively reinscribes Christianity into the New Age’s paradigm of seeking balance between masculine and feminine principles.

And—back to the *Revenge of the Sith*—the price for the film’s sticking to these same New Age motifs is not only its ideological confusion, but, simultaneously, its inferior narrative quality. These motifs are why Anakin’s transformation into Darth Vader—the series’ pivotal moment—lacks the proper tragic grandeur. Instead of focusing on Anakin’s hubris as an overwhelming de-

sire to intervene, to do Good, to go to the end for those he loves and thus fall to the Dark Side, Anakin is simply shown as an indecisive warrior who is gradually sliding into Evil by giving way to the temptation of Power, by falling under the spell of the evil Emperor. In other words, Lucas lacked the nerve to really apply his parallel between the shift of the Republic to Empire and of Anakin to Darth Vader. Anakin should have become a monster out his very excessive attachment with seeing Evil everywhere and fighting it.

Where, then, does this leave us? The ultimate postmodern irony is today’s strange exchange between the West and the East. At the very moment when, at the level of “economic infrastructure,” Western technology and capitalism are triumphing worldwide, at the level of “ideological superstructure,” the Judeo-Christian legacy is threatened in the West itself by the onslaught of New Age “Asiatic” thought. Such Eastern

Continued on page 36

ART SPACE



After two years of asking the Colorado State Department of Transportation (CDOT) to remove a dead tree in his front yard, Paul Sterling decided to have it sculpted into a “Peace Tree.” CDOT was not impressed and demanded to cut the tree down. Sterling staged a sit-in, but the tree was felled. To commemorate the fallen, Sterling organized a Peace Tree benefit concert for both peace and veterans’ groups. (<http://www.thepeacetree.org>)



Haskell Wexler and son Mark S. Wexler

BY MICHAEL ATKINSON

Look Out, It's Real!

"Look out, Haskell, it's real!" shouts a crew member, in the watershed moment from Haskell Wexler's 1969 seminal is-it-real-or-is-it-cinema, *American New Wave*

classic *Medium Cool*.

This moment in a fiction film wasn't fiction at all: the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago, which Wexler attended with his cast and crew anticipating a riot. Of course, he got one, got tear-gassed (and blinded for 24 hours), and for a sickly few moments, as the actors blend in with the famous chaos and the filmmaker drops to the floor, the film ruptures what we think of as American political filmmaking, and becomes political life itself.

Medium Cool was all about life and media intermingling until they have no mutually exclusive definitions, conceived and fashioned by one

of our national film tradition's great raging liberals. A two-time Oscar winner and, apparently, one of the most bull-nosed, inflexible, shit-stirring iconoclasts to ever get famous in Hollywood, Wexler, now charging into his 80s, is the focus of *Tell Them Who You Are*, a fascinating doc-portrait made by his son. Mark S. Wexler, a middle-aged photographer/TV filmmaker is, self-admittedly, a Republican brown-noser, proud politician-handshaker and all-around establishment twerp. Not surprisingly, the film is only half about Wexler's life and career; the rest is the filmmaker's effort to fathom his relationship with his dad

in an utterly conventional, memoir-doc kind of way, and getting bile, recriminations, cinematographic hectoring and, often, a second camera aimed right back at the first, for his troubles.

Still, the least that could be said about the Wexlers' uneasy co-production is that it does assemble the pieces of the father's redoubtable career: a nearly 50-year run as one of the industry's most respected cinematographers, checkered with politically fierce features and documentaries on Nicaragua, civil rights protest, the Weather Underground, Third World thug regimes, and Vietnam (with Jane Fonda in tow). Film clips from Wexler's

career can and do make you swoon, and Wexler's titanic intransigence just makes him all the more lovable. The interviewees on display—Fonda, John Sayles, Norman Jewison, Julia Roberts, George Lucas, Michael Douglas, Albert Maysles, et al.—all agree, but from a respectable remove, and no one's shy about defining Wexler as, in Jewison's words, "a pain in the ass." Even amid the idiosyncratic, nomadic throng of world-class DPs, Wexler was always resolutely nonconformist, getting fired more than once from big projects (*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, for example) for bickering with the directors, and getting on best with fellow travelers like Sayles, Michael Moore, Frank Zappa, Dennis Hopper and Hal Ashby.

Cinematographers are rarely lauded in public or acknowledged by the press or beloved by moviegoers, and yet they are often the authors, precisely, of the cinematic moments we adore and remember. *Tell Them Who You Are* is many things at once: an autumnal father-son double-self-portrait, a glimpse into a familial left-right schism that will only end in death, and a mini-history of one man's journey through American moviemaking from the postwar years to the new millennium. But, maybe most of all, it's a rare tribute to the act of shooting film—what it captures, what it cannot retain, how it binds the filmer and the viewer, how it's so involved with life that trying to separate the strands is foolishness. We may too often forget that "it's real," but Haskell Wexler never has. ■

MICHAEL ATKINSON regularly reviews movies for the *Village Voice*.

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Global Finance

Continued from page 33

wisdom, from “Western Buddhism” to Taoism, is establishing itself as the hegemonic ideology of global capitalism. But while Western Buddhism presents itself as the remedy against the stress of capitalism’s dynamics—by allowing us to uncouple and retain some inner peace—it actually functions as the perfect ideological supplement.

Consider the phenomenon of “future shock”—the popular term for how people today can no longer psychologically cope with the dazzling rhythm of technological development and the accompanying social change. Before one can become accustomed to the newest invention, another arrives to take its place, so that increasingly one lacks the most elementary “cognitive mapping.” Eastern thought offers a way out that is far superior to the desperate attempt to escape into old traditions. The way to cope with this dizzying change, such wisdom suggests, is to renounce any attempts to retain control over what goes on, rejecting such efforts as expressions of the modern logic of domination. Instead, one should “let oneself go,” drift along, while retaining an inner distance and indifference toward the mad dance of the accelerated process. Such distance is based on the insight that all of the upheaval is ultimately just a non-substantial proliferation of semblances that do not really concern the innermost kernel of our being.

Here, one is almost tempted to resuscitate the old, infamous Marxist cliché of religion as “the opium of the people,” as the imaginary supplement of real-life misery. The “Western Buddhist” meditative stance is arguably the most efficient way for us to fully participate in the capitalist economy while retaining the appearance of sanity. If Max Weber were alive today, he would definitely write a second, supplementary volume to his *Protestant Ethic*, titled *The Taoist Ethic and the Spirit of Global Capitalism*.

Therefore, the true companion piece to *Star Wars III* is Alexander Oey’s 2003 documentary, *Sandcastles: Buddhism and Global Finance*. A wonderfully ambiguous indication of our present ideological predicament,

Sandcastles combines the commentaries of economist Arnoud Boot, sociologist Saskia Sassen and the Tibetan Buddhist teacher Dzongzar Khyentse Rinpoche. Sassen and Boot discuss the gigantic scope and power, as well as social and economic effects, of global finance. Capital markets, now valued at \$83 trillion, exist within a system based purely on self-interest, in which herd behavior, often based on rumors, can



inflate or destroy the value of companies—or whole economies—in a matter of hours. Khyentse Rinpoche counters them with ruminations about the nature of human perception, illusion and enlightenment. He tries to throw a new light on the mad dance of billion-dollar speculations with his philosophico-ethical statement, “Release your attachment to something that is not there in reality, but is a perception.” Echoing the Buddhist notion that there is no self, only a stream of continuous perceptions, Sassen comments about global capital: “It’s not that there are \$83 trillion. It is essentially a continuous set of movements. It disappears and it reappears.”

But how are we to read this parallel between the Buddhist ontology and the structure of virtual capitalism’s universe? The documentary tends toward the humanist

reading: Seen through a Buddhist lens, the exuberance of global financial wealth is illusory, divorced from the objective reality—the very human suffering caused by deals made on trading floors and in boardrooms invisible to most of us. However, if one accepts the premise that the value of material wealth, and one’s experience of reality, is subjective, and that desire plays a decisive role in both daily life and neoliberal economics, isn’t it also possible to draw the exact opposite conclusion? Perhaps our traditional viewpoint of the world was based on naive notions of a substantial, external reality composed of fixed objects, while the hitherto unknown dynamic of “virtual capitalism” confronts us with the illusory nature of reality. What better proof of the non-substantial nature of reality than a gigantic fortune that can dissolve into nothing in a couple of hours due to a sudden false rumor? Consequently, why complain that financial speculations with futures markets are “divorced from objective reality,” when the basic premise of Buddhist ontology is that there *is* no “objective reality”?

The only “critical” lesson to be drawn from Buddhism’s perspective on virtual capitalism is that one should be aware that we are dealing with a mere theater of shadows, with no substantial existence. Thus we need not fully engage ourselves in the capitalist game, but play it with an inner distance. Virtual capitalism could thus act as a first step toward “liberation.” It confronts us with the fact that the cause of our suffering is not objective reality—there is no such thing—but rather our Desire, our craving for material things. All one has to do then, after ridding oneself of the false notion of a substantial reality, is simply renounce desire itself and adopt an attitude of inner peace and distance. No wonder Buddhism can function as the perfect ideological supplement to virtual capitalism: It allows us to participate in it with an inner distance, keeping our fingers crossed, and our hands clean, as it were.

It is against such a temptation that we should remain faithful to the Christian legacy of separation, of elevating some principles above others. ■

Sanders Steps Up

Continued from page 19

town meetings in the country on corporate control over the media and the USA Patriot Act. At a meeting last week in Springfield, Vermont, more than 250 people came out to talk about poverty. We use our office to educate and organize and to bring people together to discuss some of the most important issues facing this country. When people get the opportunity to talk about the real issues, it becomes clear how vacuous the present agenda is. I have never met anyone in Vermont who thinks it's a good idea to give tax breaks to billionaires and cut back on health care and education. Nobody. It's only when political consciousness is very low and people aren't talking about the real issues that somebody with a straight face can present the Bush agenda.

You've been examining issues and setting an agenda at town meetings across Vermont. What role does the media play in exploring issues and setting the national agenda?

Corporate control of the media, media consolidation and growing censorship threats are enormous issues that we have been actively

involved with. The central issue is not just the right-wing slant of the corporate media. That's obvious. All you have to do is look at how they covered the war in Iraq and how millions of Americans had to go to the BBC or the CBC to get an objective view. It's not just the difference of how they covered Bill Clinton who was under attack before he took office and under attack when he left office. This was Clinton, a moderate democrat, as opposed to

on Earth, the fact that we are the only industrialized country in the world without a national health care system—those are also non-issues. Will the media talk about our health care problem? Sure they will. Will they talk about how other countries are doing better for less? No they won't.

The reality of people's lives is not reflected in the media, and therefore people begin to question their very existence, as if they were

When people get the opportunity to talk about the real issues, it becomes clear how vacuous the present agenda is.

Bush, a right-wing Republican, who gets very little scrutiny compared to Clinton.

The far more important issue is what they don't cover. To the average American today, the most important issue is why that person is working longer hours for lower wages and why his or her standard of living has declined over the past 30 years. But for much of the corporate media it's a non-issue. The growing gap between the rich and the poor, the fact that we have the most unequal distribution of wealth of any major country

the only ones struggling hard. And as a result they think their problems are unique to them, and are not social or political problems that we as a nation can solve by working together. The result of that is that people lose interest in the political process, don't vote or simply pay attention to the cultural issues that the right-wing propagates.

In my view, the corporate media is certainly one of the main factors in the depoliticalization of our country and the low level of political consciousness. ■



Battle for PBS

Continued from back page

divide the world into Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, and allow journalists to pretend they have done their job if, instead of reporting the truth behind the news, they merely give each side an opportunity to spin the news.

I decided long ago that this wasn't healthy for democracy. I came to see that "news is what people want to keep hidden and everything else is publicity." Objectivity is not satisfied by two opposing people offering competing opinions, leaving the viewer to split the difference.

When PBS asked me after 9/11 to start a new weekly broadcast, they wanted us to make it different from anything else on the air—commercial or public broadcasting. They asked us to tell stories no one else was reporting and to offer a venue to people who might not otherwise be heard.

But we also had a second priority. We intended to do strong, honest and accurate reporting, telling stories we knew people in high places wouldn't like. I told our producers and correspondents that in our field reporting our job was to get as close as possible to the verifiable truth. This was all the more imperative in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. America could be entering a long war against an elusive and stateless enemy with no definable measure of victory and no limit to its duration, cost or foreboding fear. The rise of a homeland security state meant government could justify extraordinary measures in exchange for protecting citizens against unnamed, even unproven, threats. I reminded our team of how the correspondent and historian, Richard Reeves, answered a student who asked him to define real news. "Real news," Reeves responded, "is the news you and I need to keep our freedoms."

For these reasons and in that spirit we

went about reporting on Washington as no one else in broadcasting—except occasionally "60 Minutes"—was doing. We reported on the expansion of the Justice Department's power of surveillance. We reported on the escalating Pentagon budget and expensive weapons that didn't work. We reported on how campaign contributions influenced legislation and policy to skew resources to the comfortable and well-connected while our troops were fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq with inadequate training and armor. We reported on how the Bush administration was shredding the Freedom of Information Act. We went around the country to report on how closed-door, back-room deals in Washington were costing ordinary workers and taxpayers their livelihood and security. We reported on offshore tax havens that enable wealthy and powerful Americans to avoid their fair share of national security and the social contract.

And always—because what people know depends on who owns the press—we kept coming back to the media business itself, to how mega media corporations were pushing journalism further and further down the hierarchy of values, how giant radio cartels were silencing critics while shutting communities off from essential information, and how the mega media companies were lobbying the FCC for the right to grow ever more powerful.

The broadcast caught on. Our ratings grew every year. There was even a spell when we were the only Public Affairs broadcast on PBS whose audience was going up instead of down.

Then strange things began to happen. Friends in Washington called to say that they had heard of muttered threats that the PBS reauthorization would be held off "unless Moyers is dealt with." Apparently there was apoplexy in the right wing aerie when I closed the broadcast one Friday night by putting an American flag in my lapel and said:

I wore my flag tonight. First time. Until now I haven't thought it necessary to display a little metallic icon of patriotism for everyone to see. It was enough to vote, pay my taxes, perform my civic duties, speak my mind, and do my best to raise our kids to be good Americans.

Sometimes I would offer a small prayer of gratitude that I had been born in a country whose institutions sustained me, whose armed forces protected me, and whose ideals inspired me; I offered my heart's affections in return. It no more occurred to me to flaunt the flag on my chest than it did to pin my mother's picture on my lapel to prove her son's love. Mother knew where I stood; so does my country. I even tuck a valentine in my tax returns on April 15.

So what's this doing here? Well, I put it on to take it back. The flag's been hijacked and turned into a logo—the trademark of a monopoly on patriotism. On those Sunday morning talk shows, official chests appear adorned with the flag as if it is the good housekeeping seal of approval. During the State of the Union, did you notice Bush and Cheney wearing the flag? How come? No administration's patriotism is ever in doubt, only its policies. And the flag bestows no immunity from error. When I see flags sprouting on official lapels, I think of the time in China when I saw Mao's little red book on every official's desk, omnipresent and unread.

But more galling than anything are all those moralistic ideologues in Washington sporting the flag in their lapels while writing books and running Web sites and publishing magazines attacking dissenters as un-American. They are people whose ardor for war grows disproportionately to their distance from the fighting. They're in the same league as those swarms of corporate lobbyists wearing flags and prowling Capitol Hill for tax breaks even as they call for more spending on war.

So I put this on as a modest riposte to men with flags in their lapels who shoot missiles from the safety of Washington think tanks, or argue that sacrifice is good as long



as they don't have to make it, or approve of bribing governments to join the coalition of the willing (after they first stash the cash.) I put it on to remind myself that not every patriot thinks we should do to the people of Baghdad what Bin Laden did to us. The flag belongs to the country, not to the government. And it reminds me that it's not un-American to think that war—except in self-defense—is a failure of moral imagination, political nerve, and diplomacy. Come to think of it, standing up to your government can mean standing up for your country.

That did it. That—and our continuing reporting on overpricing at Halliburton, chicanery on K-Street, and the heavy, if divinely guided, hand of Tom DeLay.

When Senator Trent Lott protested that the Corporation for Public Broadcasting “has not seemed willing to deal with Bill Moyers,” a new member of the board, a Republican fundraiser named Cheryl Halpern, who had been appointed by President Bush, agreed that CPB needed more power to do just that sort of thing. She left no doubt about the kind of penalty she would like to see imposed on malefactors like Moyers.

But the *New York Times* reported that he enlisted Karl Rove to help kill a proposal that would have put on the CPB board people with experience in local radio and television. The *Times* also reported that “on the recommendation of administration officials” Tomlinson hired a White House flack (I know the genre) named Mary Catherine Andrews as a senior CPB staff member. While she was still reporting to Karl Rove at the White House, Andrews set up CPB's new ombudsman's office. And only a few weeks ago did we learn that Tomlinson had spent \$10,000 last year to hire a contractor who would watch my show and report on political bias.

In a May 10 op-ed in *The Washington Times*, CPB Chairman Tomlinson tells of a phone call from an old friend complaining about my bias. He wrote: “The friend explained that the foundation he heads made a six-figure contribution to his local television station for digital conversion. But he declared there would be no more contributions until something was done about the network's bias.”

Apparently that's Kenneth Tomlinson's method of governance. Money talks and buys the influence it wants.

I would like to ask him to listen to a different voice.

This letter came to me last year from a woman in New York, five pages of handwriting. She said, among other things,

“After the worst sneak attack in our history, there's not been a moment to reflect, a moment to let the horror resonate, a moment to feel the pain and regroup as humans. No, since I lost my husband on 9/11, not only our family's world, but the whole world seems to have gotten even worse than that tragic day.” She wanted me to know that on 9/11 her husband was not on duty. “He was home with me having coffee. ... But my Charlie took off like a lightning bolt to be with his men from the Special Operations Command. ‘Bring my gear to the plaza,’ he told his aide immediately after the first plane struck the North Tower. ... He took action based on the responsibility he felt for his job and his men and for those towers that he loved.”

In the FDNY, she continued, chain-of-command rules extend to every captain of every fire house in the city. “If anything happens in the firehouse—at any time—even if the captain isn't on duty or on vacation—that captain is responsible for everything that goes on there 24/7.” So she asked: “Why is this administration responsible for nothing? All that they do is pass the blame. This is not leadership. ...

Watch everyone pass the blame again in this recent torture case [Abu Ghraib] of Iraqi prisons.”

She told me she was a faithful fan of NOW. She wrote: “We need more programs like yours to wake America up. ... Such programs must continue amidst the sea of false images and name-calling that divide America now. ... Such programs give us hope that search will continue to get this imperfect human condition on to a higher plane. Without public broadcasting, all we would call news would be merely carefully controlled propaganda.”

Enclosed with the letter was a check made out to “Channel 13–NOW” for \$500.

I keep a copy of that check above my desk to remind me of what journalism is about.

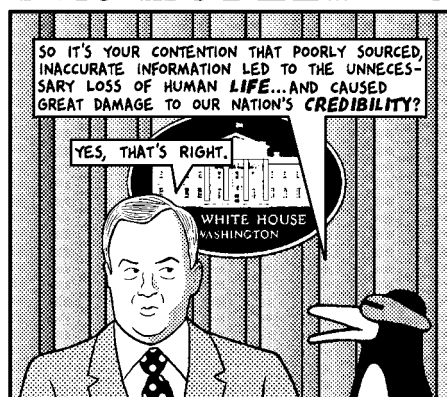
Kenneth Tomlinson has his demanding donors.

I'll take the widow's mite any day. ■

This essay is adapted from a speech Bill Moyers gave on May 15 at the National Conference on Media Reform in St. Louis. The full text, which also recounts President Richard Nixon's attempts to muzzle public broadcasting, can be read at www.freepress.net/news/8120.

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



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The Battle for PBS

BY BILL MOYERS

The story I'd like to share with you goes to the core of our belief that the quality of democracy and the quality of journalism are deeply entwined. Public media is now under attack, as am I, by the right-wing media and their allies at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

CPB was established almost 40 years ago to set broad policy for public broadcasting and to be a firewall between political influence and program content. What some on this board are now doing today, led by its chairman, Kenneth Tomlinson, is too important, too disturbing and yes, even too dangerous not to respond to.

I take in stride attacks by the radical right-wingers who have not given up demonizing me although I retired over six months ago. They've been after me for years now and I suspect they will be stomping on my grave to make sure I don't come back from the dead. I should remind them, however, that one of our boys pulled it off some 2,000 years ago—after the Pharisees, Sadducees and Caesar's surrogates thought they had shut him up for good. Of course I won't be expecting that kind of miracle, but I should put my detractors on notice: They might just compel me out of the rocking chair and back into the anchor chair.

Who are they? They are the people obsessed with control, using the government to threaten and intimidate. They are the people who are hollowing out middle-class security even as they enlist the sons and daughters of the working class in a war to make sure Ahmad Chalabi winds up controlling Iraq's oil. They are the people who turn faith-based initiatives into a slush fund and who encourage the pious to look heavenward and pray so as not to see the long arm of privilege and power picking their pockets. They are the people who squelch free speech in an effort to obliterate dissent and consolidate their orthodoxy into the official view of reality from which any deviation becomes unpatriotic heresy.

And if that's editorializing, so be it. A free press is one where it's OK to state the conclusion you're led to by the evidence.

I'm in hot water because my colleagues and I at "NOW" didn't play by the conventional rules of Beltway journalism. Those rules

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38